RAY BRADBURY

YESTERMORROW

OBVIOUS ANSWERS TO IMPOSSIBLE FUTURES

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Annotation

Experience the world of tomorrow as imagined by visionary science fiction author Ray Bradbury. Combining images from his past along with his personal musings about the future, the result is Yestermorrow: Obvious Answers to Impossible Futures. Entwined within a series of retrospective memoirs, Bradbury shares his thoughts on the state of the world—how the past and present are reflected in society, technology, and popular culture, as well as the need for thinkers and imagineers to be the architects of the future. In this extraordinary collection of essays, poetry, and philosophical reflection, readers are treated to a glimpse inside the mind of one of the most celebrated and prolific authors of the twentieth century. Bradbury reveals the creative sparks that led to some of his most well-known and enthralling stories, along with his authorial influences on his journey to becoming a prominent figure in modern literature.

- Ray Bradbury
  - THE VOYAGE TO FAR METAPHOR AND ELEPHANT INDIA: A PREFACE
  - FILL ME WITH WONDER, YOU ARCHITECTS
  - ART AND SCIENCE FICTION
  - THE GIRLS WALK THIS WAY; THE BOYS WALK THAT WAY
  - THE AESTHETICS OF LOSTNESS
  - WHO OWNS WHAT AND WHICH AND WHY
  - TO BE TRANSPORTED
  - THE GREAT AMERICAN “WHAT AM I DOING HERE, AND WHY DID I BUY THAT?” HARDWARE STORE
  - THE AESTHETICS OF SIZE
  - YESTERMORROW PLACE
  - YES, WE’LL GATHER AT THE RIVER
  - GO NOT TO GRAVEYARDS
  - DAY AFTER TOMORROW
  - THE RENAISSANCE PRINCE AND THE BAPTIST MARTIAN
  - FEDERICO FELLINI
  - THE HIPBONE OF ABRAHAM L.
  - MOVIOLA MICKEY or HOW TO JUMP-START A MOUSE AND ANIMATE AN ANIMATION MUSEUM
  - BEYOND 1984: THE PEOPLE MACHINES
  - THE GREAT ELECTRIC TIME MAZE
  - A FEASTING OF THOUGHTS, A BANQUETING OF

WORDS
- SCIENCE FICTION: BEFORE CHRIST AND AFTER 2001
- GRAND TOUR 2484
- OF WHAT IS PAST, OR PASSING, OR TO COME
- AFTERWORD
- ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
- Copyright

Ray Bradbury
YESTERMORROW
Obvious Answers To Impossible Futures

For
WALT DISNEY
who started me on this journey when I was seven,

and to
all the others who helped me continue the journey at Disney Imagineering:
ROY DISNEY JR., JOHN HENCH, JOHN DECUIR JR., MARTY SKLAR, VAN ROMANS, MARC DAVIS, and TIM DELANEY.

and
JON JERDE
who convinced me, late in life, that I was some sort of creative consultant,

and
JODY GREENWALD
who dropped me on wires down out of the Shubert Theater flies to land me in a world of Designers,

and
CAROL SOUCEK KING
and WALTON BROWN
who caught me and tossed me into the pages of Designers West,

to all, my gratitude and love…

THE VOYAGE TO FAR METAPHOR AND ELEPHANT INDIA: A PREFACE

These essays were written mostly under the drunken influence of my dawn voices, my theater of morning, as I call it.

Any owner of cats will know of what I speak. Cats come at dawn to sit on your bed. They may not nip your nose or inhale your breath or make a sound. They simply sit there and stare at you until you open one eyelid and spy them there about to drop dead for need of feeding.

So it is with ideas. They come silently in the hour of trying to wake up and remember my name. The notions and fancies sit on the edge of my wits, whisper in my ears and then, if I don't rouse, give more than cats give: a good knock in the head, which gets me out and down to my typewriter before the ideas flee or die or both.

In any event, I make the ideas come to me. I do not go to them. I provoke their patience by pretending disregard. This infuriates the latent creature until it is almost raving to be born and once born, nourished.

I subscribe to the Big Bang theory.

Which is to say that if there isn't one Big Bang each day in my life I feel ignored and bereft. If the right side of my brain rolls over and grabs a snooze on my left, I immediately run, jump in a desert pool until the old brain divides in proper halves.

What we have here then in this book is a menu of Big Bangs, which may well be small pippins and stale popcorn to you. What does not fill your mind and propel you to the typewriter, drawing board or computer, may well have filled and driven mine.

My plans for hardware stores, mouse museums, and camera obscura-photo-display-histories of artists and their palettes have been lying there like electric sockets waiting to shock for dozens or scores of years. I'm glad I happened to be the one who wet his thumb, shoved it in a creative socket and received a shock. With my hair upended I ran to my typewriter for further jolts. Each shock, each jolt, is recorded herein.

All that being true, what is my background?

Back around my thirteenth or fourteenth Christmas, my folks ruined the day. How? By giving me sweaters, socks, shirts, and several ties I wanted to hang myself with by the end of that dreadful, dull December morn.

"Don't ever do that to me again!" I shouted. "Toys is what I want, dammit! Toys!"

My shout has continued every Yuletide since. I have had to train

my wife and four daughters, and all of my friends, to do birthday and Christmas shopping for me only at Toys-R-Us or F.A.O. Schwarz. My basement workshop and my typing office are littered with magic sets, robots, Godzillas, masks, dinosaurs and—leapin' lizards!—an eight-foot-tall Bullwinkle that used to stand in the window of the Rocky and Bullwinkle Emporium on Sunset Boulevard.

One of my closest friends is Stan Freberg, America's greatest non-stop humorist. When I murmured "Xanadu!" on entering his palatial home for the first time, he ran down in the basement and ran back up with a sled on which "ROSEBUD" was painted in great flourishes.

My first stories, at age twelve, were written on a toy. One of those tin dial typewriters with a circular, rotating alphabet that you turn and press down, taking roughly half an hour to do one or two paragraphs. But rotate, press, rotate, press I did, and writer I became.

How come this madness, early and late, for toys? Because I early-on sensed that they, like poetry, were essences of things, compacted symbols of possible or impossible lives. In sum, I absolutely knew that metaphor was all and everything! Metaphors for breakfast, by God. Sugar and cream 'em, spoon 'em down!

I was reminded again, during the Statue of Liberty celebration, that without metaphor we cannot understand, we cannot comprehend, we cannot know ourselves, or others. The gift of being able to compact experience, life, into convenient packets, is pivotal. Without the gift, we would be a-sea in doubts, and miscomprehensions. With it, we know who we are, and can tell one another, hoping that it is true. To sense, to know, to say at the age of twelve or twenty: I am a writer, I am an artist, I am an actor. Not maybe or hope to be, but I *am* right *now*!

My gift, if I have one, is on occasion to sit in with groups, sometimes with museums, sometimes with corporations, to tell them who they are. To, in effect, solve their puzzlements, find their metaphor. Sometimes they know it all along, of course. Most of the time, in fact, they have a generalized sense of their aims. But often they have been so busy doing what they do, that they cannot easily hang a proper label on themselves. I must come along, then, as an amiable observer to take notes and make sums.

I am, then, the master of the obvious. Once I drum up a label, spell them their metaphor, everyone says, "Of course! Good Lord, that's *exactly* what we are! How come *we* didn't see that? Or, seeing it, *shout* it!"

Thus my subtitle: Obvious Answers to Impossible Futures. Which means, further, that one of the reasons I enjoy going through a toy factory is that I am surrounded by nothing *but* metaphors. Celebrations of joyful concepts. Blueprints and dreams extruded forth

in three-dimensional form. Which is not to say that all factories are not manufacturing metaphors; they are. A rifle, or a cannon, is a metaphor for men throwing rocks. What started out at the mouths of caves, extended itself more violently in men's heads, and then into machine shops and ammunition powder mills, where the art of throwing things refined itself. So a few feet or a few yards became a thousand yards or five miles. But the dream of the distance and the energy needed had to come first. The unborn metaphor.

A computer factory is a metaphor for a new kind of library, is it not? True, computers do not look like books, but that is what they are; mechanical folios that hide symbols in their electronic brains and print them forth when we need books, very small or very large.

The Viking Lander on Mars is a toy grown to large size, a metaphor of a dream; that dream of extending our will, our hand, our seeing eye to another world. It is not a machine, it is us. All metaphors are us whether they exist in two or three dimensions or as pure sound or music.

But, as I say, I far prefer the factory of toys, for obvious reasons: I, like all men, have never grown up. Other men lie and say they have. I refuse to lie. I try to be a creative child, using my immaturity in such ways as benefit my society rather than harm it.

For it is men who inhabit toy shops to buy the toys that women think are foolish—monorails, trains, planes, laser guns, computer games, tanks and artillery—while women drop in to buy dolls for their children. They have few needs for the kind of toys that men love and invent and grow to large size to fill our cultures if not necessarily our civilizations. After all, women are born to have living dolls, children to whom they become mothers and teachers. *If* they choose. *If* they wish, I might add hastily. It's up to them. *If* they choose not, then they must join the long line of men seeking jobs. For men come into the world naked, with no prime creativity. We men are secondary creators. We cannot create life. We can help instill it, but there our function ceases. We are left unclothed, jobless and seeking our future in toys. We fill our garages with dreams and then open the doors and let out the first paperbag Montgolfier balloon, the first Ford, the first Kitty Hawk bicycle-become airship, the first large-eared mouse named Mickey, the first Pasadena college rocket-team, Von Karmen's students, who sprouted the Jet Propulsion Lab for space-traveling, the first Wozniak Apple to be polished in Silicon Valley. All toys, self-inseminated, in garages and let loose in gargantuan form to change the world. Toys. Toys.

We are all in the same business, are we not? I make symbols on paper to explain the three-dimensional symbols that leap, roll, dance, and sing out of your manufactory halls.

And it follows that if I do not love and have fun with my ideas, and if you do not do the same, I will write bad stories and you will make bad toys.

I suppose another convenient cross reference might be the concrete mixer. You toss all the ingredients in, mix with water, pour, and let harden. What you get is something other than what went in. Surprise!

That is the element we all hope and pray for. To surprise not only others, but ourselves.

The proper recipe would seem to be, for a writer of stories, or deviser of toys, to toss as many images, as many aspects, as many notions about your family, your city, your country, your other arts, and your times, into your head; through your eyeballs onto your retina, into your ears vibrating your tympani, excruciating your fingertips, provoking your nostrils, exciting your taste buds. From this complete education, this overflow of stimuli, must come some sort of provocative explosion—this thing we call creativity.

When I was a boy, the toys that were metaphors for Outer Space were few and far between. On occasion, in the thirties, Cocomalt would offer some new Buck Rogers gadget—mainly a decoder button or ring—but very rarely a disintegrator. And, hell, what has a disintegrator to do with rockets and star travel? You could buy a Buck Rogers rubber-stamp outfit when you were fourteen, wherewith to ink and stamp out your own twenty-fifth century comic strip. But real spaceships, stamped out of tin, were many years off and beyond. The dream of space had not as yet hyperventilated the society, and therefore had caused no heavy breathing at the toy factories across the world.

Today the world is flooded with toys that represent today, tomorrow, and the worlds beyond tomorrow. The country of Japan, our 51st state, is nuttier and crazier about toys, spaceships, robots, laser guns, than we are. Bigger, brighter, quicker, louder, here come the Japanese running with their Godzillas and Walkmen, taking pictures of themselves taking pictures of themselves taking pictures of themselves until they vanish up the backside of a VHS videocassette unit. This last toy, and toy it is, will change the history of our world—and the history of education, if we have the wits and the imagination to use it. For this toy will make available to all the schools of the world, thousands of documentaries on hundreds of subjects, unseen until now, save to members of the Documentary Committee for the Academy Awards. I was on the committee for eighteen years and saw 90 hours of film each January, in order to choose a winner. These incredible films, cheap now by the dozen, can be transported and flung from side to side of our continent, to be used as teaching hand

grenades. Recipe: toss one into a videocassette classroom, and allow it to explode students into curiosity and thus creativity. What a toy!

But I have gone on a long while here, and there are dozens of things left unsaid. I close by pointing to the obvious fact, again, that we are all working at the same job.

As I said to a group of Union Bank officials last year, "I hope you people don't think you are in the business of making money!"

There was a moment of stunned silence.

Before anyone said anything I went on: "You're in the business of predicting the future. If you predict it well, and act on the prediction, *then* and *only* then will you deserve and have a profit."

So there you have it. Banks, films, paintings, agriculture, toys. We share the commonality of dreams, which we name tomorrow.

We are busy, as Wordsworth put it, weighing the mischief against the promised gain, measuring malice against the possible good.

Wordsworth said it, but there were others before him who both welcomed and doubted the various devices as they came into the world.

But only when the flood of the Industrial Revolution reached full tide did we begin to speak our fears by the day and hour. Looking at all the so-called advances or the implied retreats brought on by the locust invasion of machines, we tried to weigh the mischief of each and at the same moment place on the scales the promised gain.

We have continued to balance the scales, ask the questions, with increasing dubiety and increasing gratification ever since.

What will the videocassette do to the world? Do we retreat to plain old TV? What will TV do to the world? Do we go back to cinemas? What will cinema do to the world? Do we run back to radio? What will radio do to the world? Do we shrink back to vaudeville and stage? Or exit to the streets for mere carnivals and sideshows? Until at last, safe in our caves, we stare out at a world of retreats and wonder why the immense gain became a cowardly loss? How *does* one balance those scales?

Each time we dream a new dream, blueprint a new blueprint or extrude into three-dimensional form some new electronic or mechanical technology, we birth at the same instant the Beast of Iniquity and the Angel of Mercy.

Both are imbedded in our notions of how to improve the world, how to re-invent God and God's ways and God's by-products. If we look upon ourselves and the Garden as excluded, we think we know better. If we find ourselves brothers to Christ, we think everything's okay. We sometimes forget to consider that in a single walnut shell, good and evil, like yang and yin, eat each other's tails. Even Christ, as desert tourist for 40 days and nights, had to yell the dark blood out of

his system.

So when we strike the rock, not only wine comes forth, but toxic wastes.

I have two Godzillas in my basement. One, I gave to my daughters fifteen years ago, and took back when I saw they didn't love it as much as I did. The other, larger, painted white and with two dozen candles sprouting from his spinal column, was a gift from the Mattel Company on my 59th birthday.

I worked with Tokyo Movie Shinsa on an animated film called *Little Nemo In Slumberland*, some years back. It was sheer happiness, of course, for the Japanese delight in inventing newer and ever more miraculous toys that make da Vinci and Edison look like Abercrombie and Fitch. Whenever our language difficulties got too onerous, they or I would dig out some new wind-up-or-batteries-included beast, toss it on the conference table and laugh. Berlitz should know what we found in laughter as language.

Well, there you have it, haiku, sonnet, film image, Plato's cave and all. Plato, in his *Dialogues,* spoke of the images on the walls of his special cave being symbols of some outside world, to be interpreted differently in each head, each cave with inward eyes, which represents individual men and women trying to figure out the meaning. The glory of our age is our ability to trap and project those dreams on walls and in computer screens, encapsuled fancies that will travel, in electronic suitcases, along to Mars and beyond.

I end as I began, remembering my number two daughter, Ramona, who once said at age four, "Give me a gift and I'll eat it and eat it!"

To which I add, "Give me a gift and I'll keep it and keep it and wind it and run it down here on the floor, to the end of my days!"

I end also with the memory of a Sausalito toy shop where I lingered a few summers ago. On the way out a gang of boys ran by. One boy lingered, staring in longingly at the bright objects.

"Go in," I urged, "now, run in, stay."

"Aw, come on!" the boys urged, "that's *kid* stuff! C'mon!"

"No!" I whispered, my head turned away. The boy hesitated, then ran off with his friends. It broke my heart.

Now, don't you break it, too.

Remember the final lyrics to an old song from *Babes in Toyland.* Lyrics I have always disliked, which refer to Toyland itself:

"Once you've passed its portals you can never return again."

To hell with that.

You had damned well *better* return, or life won't be worth a damn.

Ask me. I'll show you the way.

FILL ME WITH WONDER, YOU ARCHITECTS

Fill me with wonder, you architects;
Make me wander.
Let far be near at hand
And near? Up yonder
Let me not know quite where I go,
Let me seem lost;
Stuff my eyes with texture on texture
At any cost.
Confuse me with where I might maunder
And yet arrive;
And the final end of my journey?
I'm alive!
Let each twist and turn be target and goal
So that each jigsaw scrimshaw turnabout patch
Is part to the whole.
Let me be yang, or yet again yin
Let me not sense just where I've just been.
And whether it's northwest turned south
Or southwest gone east
Brim my gaze, yeast my soul with a rampant feast.
So each part of the plan, every feature and phase
Is a chart where I'm lost and yet found in amaze,
Where you go to be spun
Like a weathercock wheel
In directions of sight, or mere touching to feel.
Let the scent of fine foods fetched to sharpen the air.
Move my moveable hunger toward an impulse to share.
But this above all, you but need name the cost.
Let me find a new soul, where I dared to be lost.

ART AND SCIENCE FICTION

Unbuilt Cities/Realized Dreams

Is there a relationship between art history, daily and Sunday comic strips, the great illustrators, and the evolution of science fiction?

Does science fiction and its unreal mirror image, fantasy, have wild roots in the art metaphors of the nineteenth century?

Does it all influence a mob of twentieth-century film magicians?

Finally, do these celluloid geniuses reinfluence the others?

We might as well ask: Are houses haunted? Does life thrive on other worlds.

Yes.

How so?

Houses are haunted by Fuseli/Blake/Goya imaginations.

Far worlds are seeded with Frank R. Paul/Robert McCall dreams.

Here-and-now cities sprout from old Melies' sprocket-dancing pictures, *Little Nemo* full-page Sunday architectures, and skyline images from William Cameron Menzies' art-directed *Things to Come.*

In the ricochet between night remembrance, palette and paint, printed word, and phantom cinema, a multitude of new worlds, spoken, seen, or watercolor-sketched, have come to birth.

A long Thanksgiving dinner. I will try to translate the menu.

Where to start?

Most of my generation, as young readers and writers of time-traveled pasts and hoped-for futures, was seized into novels illustrated by two artists: N.C. Wyeth and J. Allen St. John. Wyeth piloting his great metal white whale under-the-sea *Nautilus.* St. John astride his eight-legged thoats, dusting the acres, atrot along dry Martian seas.

We all knew that Wyeth's Captain Nemo never was and that St. John's Mars could never be. Yet amid all the chalkboard configurations of new physics and Viking Landers, we now know that the thoats will rove forever in the blowing Martian nights and Verne's crazed captain will always rave under the tides—and all because Wyeth and St. John did more than facts and physics can to figure out God's dreams for man. Both artists could describe the madness that is youth and the limitless territories that exist between a youngster's left ear and his right.

Carl Sagan, Arthur C. Clarke, and Bruce Murray of the Jet Propulsion Lab—the list of young dreamers who did not grow old is endless. The meadowlands of Cape Canaveral are strewn with grown-

up kids who swam after the grand concourse of submarines or marched behind the impossible thoats in a storm of red.

My experience differs little from theirs. Fairy tales awakened me, Wyeth and St. John sat me up, and the bright covers of *Amazing Stories* and *Wonder Stories*, and Buck Rogers in the 1929 daily papers, exploded me into the universe.

I never came back.

Would that more teachers learned to find and teach such metaphors as, once sighted, would cause the impossible desire to rise in the human breast making them want to live forever.

Why want to live forever?

So as to be able to stroll in the channels of those dead Martian "seas," or stand on the rim of that Grand Martian Canyon, which is as long and almost as wide as our entire continental United States.

So as to be able to stride into the front covers of the twenties' science fiction magazines and never come out. To be encompassed, devoured, assimilated by those wondrous metaphors of humanity's childhood dreams.

For that, almost completely, is what science fiction means to me. It is the history of towns and cities yet unbuilt, ghosting our imaginations and lifting us to rise up and find hammers and nails to build our dreams before they blow away.

I dare suggest some architects who, if you asked, would say the same: that a Frank R. Paul cover painting on an October 1929 issue of *Amazing Stories* caused them to buy pens, pencils, rulers, and drawing boards to paper up a concept and create a living world.

If you bombarded an audience with three minutes' worth of covers from the old science fiction magazines, each screened for just two or three seconds, the effect would be stunning. For city after city, wall after wall, avenue after avenue, would strike the retina and stimulate the brain. How could you not, after seeing all that explosive stuff, want to stick around and be part of the fantastic years ahead?

I was reminded of this all over again just last week when some mysterious friend sent me a complete set of tear sheets from the serialization of H.G. Wells' *The Sleeper Awakes*, which appeared in *Harper's Weekly* in 1892. In vivid illustration after illustration, the concept of a man plastered against a crystal dome four hundred feet above an incredible future city, staring down in wonder at its skyports and car-streams, was enough to locomote the old engine and ventilate desire.

It was thus with all the H.G. Wells stories and the Verne tales published between 1850 and 1912. The future was actually there. You could touch it on the bright paper. You could smell it in the oils and perfumes that permeated the ink.

It was thus when Buck Rogers awakened, in October 1929. With the help of Wilma Deering, who found him wandering out of a long-winter sleep and strapped an inertron belt on his back and jumped into the air. A million hearts leaped to life that afternoon and never stopped leaping.

These futures, so wonderfully pursued in color and line, repeated in the Sunday full-page spreads, collided with the future actually built in the 1933 Chicago World's Fair, and again in New York in 1939. I walked through those fairs, brimming with tears of joy, glad to be inside the covers of *Amazing Stories* at last, closeted with illustrations come to life and reared to touch the sky and the soul. When the two fairs were torn down, part of my heart fell with them. The future was suddenly sunk and lost. My heart would break if it never returned.

I, like others aged twelve, built the future out of papier-mâché in my backyard, in order to guarantee its return, and repeated the stuff in my first stories. As I grew into my twenties I knew that if I wrote long enough and hard enough and willed the future to return, one day it would.

So the world we live in today is the direct result, I think, of the artwork, the illustrations, and the architecture of only-yesterday's artists, who influenced films and comic strips as well as young writers and budding scientists.

If you flip back through the years 1905 to 1915 you will find the incredible cities, the impossible architecture of *Little Nemo,* as drawn by one of the greatest cartoon illustrators of the century, Winsor McCay.

Simultaneously, in France, the magician-become-cinema illusionist George Melies was popping rabbit films out of hats, full of Verne/Wells imagery, alive with architecture, impossible beasts, moon landscapes, and a pomegranate imagination that refused to sit still. If Melies influenced McCay or if McCay influenced Melies, I do not know. They are twins, racing down the same genetic track, so devastatingly full of the life-force that they knock everyone head over heels before them.

The histories of cinema and comic strips parallel each other on similar rail tracks, speeding up on through our century, rushing over mile-high viaducts, racing toward our elusive tomorrows.

The combination of all these metaphorical art forms, comic strips, magazine covers, magical films of the early twentieth century, and the World's Fairs in between, have produced the architectural science fiction films of the last twenty years.

Architectural science fiction films?

I use the description because these films have rebuilt our concepts of the future. They are the manifestations of the words of science

fiction and the architecture of our dreams.

2001 for starters. Next the big artillery that knocked us flat out: *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *Star Wars*, *The Empire Strikes Back*, and the charming *Star Trek II, III* and *IV*.

Long before them, there were *Metropolis* and *Things to Come*, echoing and presaging the wild fancies of Frank Lloyd Wright and the unrealized blueprints of Norman Bel Geddes.

The unbuilt visions of lost architectural genius have at last been raised from the graveyard sands and reared on 50-foot-high and 90-foot-wide screens by today's production designers and science fiction illustrators.

It was the cities we went to see.

Let us face it: In the final moments of *Close Encounters*, that is not —I repeat, not—a Mother Ship that drifts down from the universe. It is an entire country, a land put up in a massive architectural pod, so irresistible that, in hearing its five Pied Piper notes played again and again, the children of the world, myself included, rushed across the tarmac in our minds to get aboard and go away forever.

Such is the pull of futures riveted together as cities that pretend to be ships.

In *The Empire Strikes Back*, more cities, more architecture. What is the Emerald City doing, suspended on its own platform in a weird skyscraper, waiting for our seekers?

And, again…

Why do we go back to see *2001* over and over and over? Surely not for its one-track acting and baffling finale. We return to it because the very possibility of its interpretations frees us to carom off into the greatest of all architecture: the universe itself.

Who will ever forget their first cinematic trip into the unknown universe? The first sighting of that immense city-ship adrift to Strauss waltzes on the first night of viewing *2001*?

Or that first thunderous explosion of a *Star Wars* rocket blasting across the stars? The night I heard it, a thousand people gasped with shock, knocked in the pits of their stomachs. The glad cry that followed the shock was like the city of a thousand babes slapped into life: pure joy at the sound of the future.

I am reminded of an article I wrote for a major magazine a few years back. The magazine hated the aesthetic concept of my article so much that they paid me off and trashed the piece. What had I said that knocked their wigs askew?

I simply pointed out that science fiction and science fiction art were revolutionizing the world of the museum, the gallery, the concert hall, the cinema, and all or most of fiction.

The cultural impact of your average science fiction film made kids

wandering into art galleries wonder where all the metaphors were. They found instead drip-dry, cross-hatched, and empty canvases, bereft of any romance, poetry, image, or so much as one half of a dog-eared haiku symbol. If the cinema screens could flood their minds with such vivid portraits of imagined dreams, why not the art galleries?

From the imaginative film came the inevitable bleed-over and discovery of such illustrators as Rackham, Dulac, Grandville, Dore and the Victorian pre-Raphaelite painters. All because kids ran off to *2001* and fell from a thousand-story building, into the past as well as the future.

So the new-old clichés of the abstract and super-abstract revolution were cut across at their nonexistent knees by a riot of heretofore uninformed teenaged art critics who demanded story, symbol, and the reinvention of tale telling.

What fragmented the art galleries soon knocked a few orchestra conductors off their podiums. What started as a hum-along with the Strausses through two hours of *2001* prolonged itself into science fictional symphonies with Berlioz, Vivaldi, and a half-dozen others. The kids in their bright ignorance stumbled out of John Williams' score for *Star Wars* into *The Four Seasons* and *Symphonie Fantastique*. One helluva way, the aesthetes protested, to be educated to their finer impulse.

What, after all, did these damn-fool kids know about art?

Almost, you might say, everything.

They knew that life without image or metaphor is empty and meaningless. Hell, they said, you can learn from the Bible. Witness Daniel in that old lions' den. Once the cage doors slam and lions roar, you never forget that, do you? Well, then, in this age of machines that embody all the metaphors of man's dreaming in the last one hundred years, how come the galleries are empty of concept, vacuumed free of one lint-thread of idea, long lost from dream? You do not go to visit an elevator shaft with no elevator in it, do you? Better one bottomed out in trash, if necessary, as long as you, in the finale, are lifted.

Well, if I have beaten the dead thoat a dozen times too many, forgive. Not all of our teachers, our intellectuals, our movers and shakers, have yet discovered that this is the greatest age of metaphor, because the metaphors have peeled off the canvases, marched out of the haunted World's Fair grounds, leaped out of the comic strips, and unreeled themselves from cinema screens and computer tapes to become our whole existences, our lives, our further dreams. The artistic haiku of just the other morning has become the logarithm written to displace the astrological houses above us.

If educators and parents only truly understood, our children today

are all quasars, galaxies, black holes, laser discs, and rocket-submarines built to submerge and swim in Jupiter's soups. The architecture of the future is the substance of their dreams, fed by some of the best-wishing artists, authors, and architects.

We are all kin to the Gustave Dore and John Martin landscapes that caused the roustabout sorcerer Melies to film his secret moon, and Winsor McCay to walk his small boy Nemo upside down through inverted boulevards, and cause yet further films to be built around that grand door and wall and the huge skull on Kong's island. Ending at last with the birth of Spielberg and Lucas, who picked up the bottle marked *Drink Me*—inside of which was the whole history of magazines, comics, science fiction covers, nineteenth-century painters and etchers—and drank the whole damn thing until the founts of Technicolor squirted out their ears.

The worst, you might be tempted to say, is yet to come. Yes, but the best also, I say. Why not the best? Science fiction remains the architecture of our dreams, and science fiction illustration will continue to inspire our next generation of dreamers.

1987

THE GIRLS WALK THIS WAY; THE BOYS WALK THAT WAY

An Essay Written in 1970 To Dream the Future, Long Before Most American Malls Were Built

In Mexico, in any small-town plaza every Thursday and Sunday night with the band playing and the weather mild, the boys walk this way, the girls walk that, around and around, and the mothers and fathers sit on iron-scrolled benches and watch. In Paris, with miserable weather, in thousands of outdoor drinking and eating places, the generations gather to talk and stare. Even this late in the century in many crossroads-country-junction American towns, Saturday night finds pumpkin boys rolling in from the farms to hold up cigar storefronts with their shoulders and paw the sidewalk with their hooves as the girls go laughing by. Which is what life is all about. Gathering and staring is one of the great pastimes in the countries of the world. But not in Los Angeles. We have forgotten how to gather. So we have forgotten how to stare. And we forgot not because we wanted to, but because, by fluke or plan, we were pushed off the familiar sidewalks or banned from the old places. Change crept up on us as we slept. We are lemmings in motion now, with nowhere to go. How did we lose it all? How can we bring it back? Can't we imitate the Latins who have enough sense to make a town plaza work for them? Can't we be like those boys and girls who gather in far towns where the Iowa dust blows through like talcum powder on the air, following the ghosts of ancient locomotives? Well, I have a plan for a whole city block where we might meet as in the old days, and walk and shop and sit and talk and simply stare. And, finally, not just one block. But 80 or 90 city blocks spread over the entire freeway-junket-run of all 80 or 90 of the separate lonely Ohio-Illinois-Kansas-style towns, which is what Los Angeles truly is. But to show you my L.A. tomorrow, I must first show you what L.A. was when I grew up here. In the thirties, with TV unborn, you listened to radio or walked to the movies. Who could afford a car? No one. And, going to the movies, you stopped at the sweet shop next door for candy and popcorn, and after the show you came back to the same sweet shop for a malt or the corner drugstore for a Coke, and you lolled at those soda fountains until midnight with all your friends. For, you see, in those days there was a microscopic community in every neighborhood: the theater, the sweet shop, the drugstore fountain.

Your friends? Why, they were *always* there! Well, that dear drugstore and its hissing fount, through economics, has vanished. The few that are left have no fountains at all. The few with fountains close at six each night. The sweet shop? That was shot dead when theaters installed their own lobby popcorn and candy stalls. So, there go two of your most important social halls. Today, 30 years later, as if by proclamation, we have all been told: Move On! So we climb in our cars. We drive… and drive… and drive… and come home blind with exhaustion. We have seen nothing, nor have we been seen. Our total experience? Six waved hands, a thousand blurred faces, seventeen Volkswagen rears and some ripe curses from a Porsche and an MG behind. And when we *do* occasionally get somewhere, the Strip, or Hollywood Boulevard, what do we find? Ten thousand other Dante's Inferno Souls, locked in immovable ice floes ahead, irritably inhaling their exhausts, unwanted by themselves and the traffic police. So the exasperated madness and the inhumanity grow.

Where can we go that isn't home? What can we see that isn't TV? Why were we astonished two years back when the kids, evicted from every community by default, confronted our city fathers and the law on the new-found Sunset Boulevard stamping grounds? How do we build proper new stamping grounds in proper places for proper peoples?

Here is my remedy. A vast, dramatically planned city block. One to start with. Later on, one or more for each of the 80 towns in L.A.

My block would be a gathering place for each population nucleus. A place where, by the irresistible design and purpose of such a block, people would be tempted to linger, loiter, stay, rather than fly off in their chairs to already overcrowded places.

Let me peel my ideal shopping center like an onion:

At the exact center: a round bandstand or stage.

Surrounding this, a huge conversation pit. Enough tables and chairs so that four hundred people can sit out under the stars drinking coffee or Cokes.

Around this, in turn, would be laid the mosaics of a huge plaza walk where more hundreds might stroll at their leisure to see and be seen.

Surrounding the entirety, an immense quadrangle of three dozen shops and stores, all facing the central plaza, the conversation pit, the bandstand.

At the four corners of the block, four theaters. One for new films. A second for classic old pictures. A third to house live drama, one-act plays, or, on occasion, lectures. The fourth theater would be a coffeehouse for rock-folk groups. Each theater would hold between three hundred and five hundred people.

With the theaters as dramatic environment, let's nail down the other shops facing the plaza:

Pizza parlor. Malt shop. Delicatessen. Hamburger joint. Candy shop. Spaghetti cafe…

But, more important, what other kinds of shops are most delicious in our lives? When browsing and brooding, what's the most fun?

Stationery shops? Good. Most of us love rambling among the bright papers in such stores.

Hardware shops? Absolutely. That's where men rummage happily, prowling through the million bright objects to be hauled home for use some other year.

Two bookstores, now. Why not *three*?!

One for hardcovers, one for paperbacks and the third to be an old and rare bookseller's crypt, properly floundered in dust and half-light. This last should have a real fire-hearth at its center where, on cool nights, six easy chairs could be drawn about for idling bookmen/ students in séance with Byron's ghost, bricked in by thousands of ancient and honorable tomes. Such a shop must not only spell age but sound of its conversations.

How about an art supply shop? Fine! Paints, turpentines, brushes, the whole lovely smelling works. Next door? An art gallery, of course, with low- and high-price ranges for every purse!

A record shop, yes? Yes. They've proven themselves all over our city, staying open nights.

What about a leather shop, and a tobacconist's… but make your own list from here on! The other dozen or two dozen shops should be all shapes, sizes and concepts. A toy shop. A magic shop, perhaps, with a resident magician.

And, down a small dark cob-webbed alley, maybe a ramshackle spook theater with only 90 seats where every day and every night a different old horror film would scuttle itself spider-wise across a faintly yellow parchment-screen…

There you have my remedy. There's my plan to cure your urban ills.

Good grief! you cry, what's so new about *that*!?

Nothing, I reply, sadly. It's so old it now must become new again. Once it was everywhere in some form. Now it must be thought of and born all over again. It has existed in the arcades surrounding St. Mark's Square in Venice, Italy, for more than five hundred years. It exists in the Galleria in Milan where, one hundred years ago Mark Twain fell in love with it and wanted to stay on forever at its "tables all over these marble streets, people sitting at them, eating, drinking, smoking—crowds of other people strolling by—such is the Arcade. I should like to live in it all my life. The windows of the sumptuous

restaurants stand open, and one dines and enjoys the passing show."

If we could summon Mark Twain back from the dead he might well point out, ironically, that we already *have* many such plazas in Los Angeles, which have languished and fallen into disuse. We have forgotten the reasons why Pershing Square and the Olvera Street Plaza were built 50 and 150 years ago, as centers about which to perambulate souls and refresh existences.

Most of the elements I speak of are available on Hollywood Boulevard or the Sunset Strip. But there the automobile spoils and finally ruins any chance for real encounter, and the supermobs prevent leisurely enjoyment.

Olvera Street, already mentioned, fulfills many of my requirements, as does, on a large scale, Disneyland. You can indeed sit, eat, lounge and stare at Uncle Walt's, but you don't really go there to shop, and it isn't a community center, but a Southern California asset.

Century City qualifies in many ways. But it has no true center, the plaza sitting/eating area that would give it identity. Nor are there plans that I know of to give that new community a real navel. It will finally be a series of fine islands, each kept incommunicado from the other, cut off by villainous avenues and murderous cars. If dramatic reason prevails in time, the new theaters being built there should be connected by fantastic moving sidewalks that would gloriously transport visitors out of the theaters and over to the main restaurant/shop arena.

The Santa Monica Mall suffers for similar reasons. It has no true center. And, most nights, the stores close early.

The Farmers Market is a grand social gathering place for food. But it goes dark at six each night, seven in the summertime.

Which inevitably brings us to a rethinking of our ideas on social life and business hours.

Life really begins at dusk in Rome. In the blue hour, and late on through the idle evening, shopping continues, mixed with time to wander, linger, sit, and stare.

The Plaza I have constructed here should never be built unless it opens for business at three each afternoon. Week nights it should stay open until at least 11:00. Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights the closing hour should be 1:00 or 2:00 A.M.

Will this take some real doing? Yes. Because your average small American businessman is locked into a nine to five schedule. No new hours are worth considering. So, thousands of new customers are ignored and your small business flounders for seemingly inexplicable reasons.

Take Pico Boulevard all the way to the ocean, or Western Avenue

most of the way to Long Beach, and what do you find? Small businessmen flaking away, dying, vanishing, on all sides, mile after mile. With no pedestrians, they survive by their frail wits. The same lost and dreary little shops seem to have lingered on, changeless, from my childhood.

And if by chance there *is* pedestrian traffic on one side of Sunset, let's say, the shops immediately across die because no one crosses over. At Pico and Westwood, the stores on the north side rent for less because their income is far less than the shops on the south side, where the immense gravity of thousands of parking spaces attracts a large number of cars.

So your small businessman has many reasons to affiliate himself in such an amiable environmental plaza as the one I propose, where he will be guaranteed a fresh river of pedestrians every hour. And being situated on the north, south, east or west side of the plaza will not affect his business by so much as a cent.

Bring that small businessman in, then, into this effort to recenter our lives. Give the community back to the community, to build a base for young and old, and discourage the endless miles of mindless driving as millions of people pass other millions looking for Somewhere To Go.

But, the Somewhere To Go will only work, I repeat, if it opens late and closes late.

Los Angeles, at this very moment, has many smaller shopping centers that stay open fairly late but which are, instantly, unappetizing. Arriving, one sees thousands of cars, acres of blacktop and confusion. Or, if the cars are hidden out back, as at the Santa Monica Mall or the small plaza near the May Co. at Pico-Overland, you find, once again, the same mistake—no true center, no dramatic watering trough for one's imaginary horses, no place where one can whittle, spit, and scratch.

Ocean Park, before it was improved out of existence, once had to perfection all the things I most desire.

No, I don't mean P.O.P. I mean the old Ocean Park fifteen years ago, with its bingo parlors and pastrami dips and pizza shanties, its bookshops, its theater, the seedy pier itself with all its frayed games, and thousands of places to sit and snooze or yammer and gossip. It's gone now, its shops plowed under and concreted over. Its good people have been real-estated, delegated, outlawed away, pent up for some unnamed sins in those dreadful new tenement towers that front the beach, and not allowed out. What's to go out for, if you dared? No one bothered to think, to remember, to rebuild the small shops. No one had even a small dream that maybe old and young might like to deliciously collide and saunter in thousands of small, warm crowds as

they once did night and day by that beautiful sea.

A shred of that grand old Ocean Park is stranded high and dry, praise God, right now on Fairfax Avenue. There, by sheer fine good Jewish community spirits, I find the kind of life I have been describing in this article. With Canter's Delicatessen as social gymnasium center, and many shops open most nights, it is one of the last few lost places for us to Flee, Go Find, for us to actually Look, See Friends! As in the thirties when just such social assemblages of familiar faces happened every night in our lives around Western and Olympic, Beverly Boulevard and Vermont, or Vermont and Washington, where life, not very high but certainly not low, was lived.

Let me beat the long dead urban horse once more, and then recapitulate.

Two years ago, I lectured one Saturday night in Pasadena. Finishing about 8:30, I walked down into the heart of Pasadena searching for a cab.

The streets and sidewalks were empty! No cars. No people. And this, mind you, early on a Saturday night. It looked more like Sunday sunrise in Zion, Illinois.

Finding a cab, I made it to Hollywood. There, at Vine Street, I found a far more unnerving sight: traffic blocked for a mile in four directions. Beetle infestations of automobiles loomed and burnt out their motors everywhere. Thousands of people jammed the sidewalks.

The facts are plain and sad. Pasadena, and many places like it, is shut. Hollywood, with its good and bad, hustlers and prosties and yellow-robed Buddhist chanters and singers, is open. The Pickwick Bookshop, true center of Hollywood for most of us, is wall-to-wall people every night but Sunday.

I could list hundreds of similar community examples. But they all add up to our singing a blues version of that old song, "Where Is My Wandering Boy Tonight?" We ought to know. We helped drive him off and away.

Which brings us round to a final description of my Plaza:

• Bandstand at the center on which local talent can sing and play.

• Four hundred or five hundred chairs surrounding the bandstand, where people can sit all night, every night, under the heavens. In winter, such as it is in California, outdoor heating can be installed.

• Around this, the great pedestrian treadway. On this, *real* people actually *walking*!

• And around them, in turn, the shops, the theaters.

• Underneath: parking. Or the next block over, hidden, for God's sake, behind bushes and trees.

Final points:

• In all eating places, plenty of booths facing each other, for

conviviality. Too many places, like Baskin-Robbins, have seats lined up against the walls. The message implied is: So Long. Get Away. Good-bye.

• Again: late hours. Better a small businessman working till midnight than a small businessman bankrupt and on relief.

If you can't build a large plaza, build a small one with just one or two theaters and a dozen shops. The most important element that remains constant is the center, the conversation pit, the plaza walk-around concourse where people *know*, are absolutely sure if they bother to go, they will see someone they knew from junior high, high school, college or some neighboring area. The Bunch, The Gang, The Friends must have a Hearth.

Let's start with one plaza such as this, and build more. Needless to say, the ones that follow must not duplicate the first in texture or color or sense of drama. The plaza conceived in Fullerton should not be repeated in Pacoima, Watts or Baldwin Park.

Just as in the great cities of the world, there is only one Eiffel Tower for Paris, one Tower of London, one St. Peter's for Rome, so, on a lesser level, each plaza in all the 80 lost and needful Los Angeles small towns should in some way strike individual chords of the Mexican, Jewish or Black backgrounds they arise from. In West Hollywood, of course, you would let the crazy fine Greenwich Village spirit that runs wild there work your design for you.

We have been yelling for years against the Orwellian world of 1984, and at the same time have been busy building such a world and walling ourselves in.

Now we must remember that drama and theater are not special and separate and private things in our lives. They are the true stuffs of living, the heart and soul of any true city. It follows we must begin to provide architectural stages upon which our vast populations can act out their lives.

Many plazas exist now, waiting to be rehabituated, redramatized, like the Main Street Plaza and Pershing Square. Others, like the Santa Monica Mall, or Century City, lack only a true pedestrian walk-around center to make their hearts beat. Most must be built from the ground up.

And, in building, it seems, we must look back to the dear Jews and the rare Latins to learn how to live.

O Children of Israel, come out of Fairfax and old Boyle Heights. Send us your architectural rabbis to lead us from the wilderness of the blacktop and oil drips and gasoline fumes. Open our eyes so we may see. Sit us down so we may rest. Open our mouths so we may talk and eat…

O small towns of Mexico, send us your mariachis to strum at the

centers of our plazas to bring the people back, the girls wandering this way, the boys ambling that, two warm rivers running softly over the wide mosaic walks.

Dear Moses, sweet Virgin of Guadalupe, teach us Gentile Protestants how once more to spend an evening that is neither far-traveling and senseless, nor violent, nor sick, nor hidden away from the world in colored but colorless TV.

Inhabitants, inheritors of Tel Aviv and Guadalajara, hear me now. The hour grows late. Help, o help. Give us back to ourselves.

For what finer gift *is* there in all the world?

1970

THE AESTHETICS OF LOSTNESS

Written as a conceptual design for Horton Plaza in San Diego.

To be lost. How frightening.

To be *safely* lost. How wonderful

To not know where we are, as children, is a nightmare.

To not know where we are, as adults, traveling, is a perfect dream.

I know not if others have dared an essay on this subject. I have rambled on about it for years and feel I should now get it out on the pavements.

Think back on your first trip to New York, London, Paris or Rome. Large cities, preferably, for then the chance of getting deliciously lost is enhanced.

Do we fly to far places, then, to get our weathercocks spun north for south, west for east?

We do not set *out* for that. But that *is* the secret part and portion of our adventures.

To wander down Piccadilly, turn left, and suddenly say: "Where the hell am I?"

Or to set off in the wrong direction from the Spanish Steps and freeze—wondering which right or left turn to make.

And then the reverse situation—

A week, two weeks, or a month later, figuring the whole damn thing out and suffering what might well be called the *Travel Blues.* In other words, wanting to be on the move again, to plan again, to know that arriving is okay, but the mysterious journey is the best reason for living. Now, having figured out a town or a city, you are seized by the Desperate Empties.

London as a puzzlement is superb.

London, with its puzzles solved, deflates.

Temporarily, of course. London and Paris are so gigantic it is easy to find new places wherein to vanish and be safe and all in one piece happily *reappear.* I would not recommend this procedure, this year in New York. Such vanishing might result in a permanent disappearance.

What am I getting at? Why this raving on about environmental inscrutability and the bewildered traveler? Well, most certainly one of the reasons we jet to other lands and other towns is the boredom of the too-familiar at home. We go to Hong Kong and Tokyo not for the reason that we profess, but for the education that leaps upon us unbidden, and the romance that hides around a corner to vanish us for

an hour or a day. At the eternally young core of any sojourn is the surprise and delight of being confounded and happily sunk in indecision.

All right, Bradbury, get to it.

The sum?

We have begun to build cities that are too easily solved. There is no mystery, no imaginative lure, no texture in the blank facades, the empty and expressionless faces of banks or other corporate structures. This plus no candy, book, or sweet shops means that when the bank shuts and the IBMers gas on home, the city drops dead. You can skate through those places at 50 miles an hour, for there is nothing to see, nothing to wonder about or linger over. There is no bafflement.

The blind buildings do not even hold out a tin cup, asking for dimes. So, because no texture, no attraction, no chance for you to be enticed into even *trying* to get lost.

What can we learn from this?

That even in our interior malls, we can plan in such a way that, for a brief if not lengthy time, we can enjoy a few sensations of lostness. To build into these arcades twists and turns, and upper levels that by their mysteriousness draw the eye and attract the soul: That can be the subliminal lure of all future architectures.

Hell, why not, at the very top level of some future mall rear an entire floor labeled: THE ATTIC? Up there stash all your antique shops, antiquarian booksellers, Victorian toy merchants, magic shops, Halloween card and decoration facilities and little cinemas running "Dracula" fourteen hours a day, or name another half-dozen specialty stores that wouldn't mind being half-lit and fully exciting. Do you mean to tell me that wouldn't be the *first* place the kids would rush, hurling themselves and their parents onto escalators headed up among the fireflies and dingbats?

Said Attic to have even more twists, turns, angles, and roundabouts than all six floors below.

Then, when the kids float down with their stunned parents, time to get half-lost on *other* floors.

To sum yet again: Cities and malls are no fun if your compass is functioning with complete accuracy. The hint of danger without danger. The chance to ascend into expectancy, the chance to descend into satisfaction and delight. To come out of London or Paris, delivering and retrieving yourself from the Lost and Found. To similarly deliver and retrieve yourself from some future New Orleans or Chicago or Denver—*Where the Hell am I*, *Oh Yeah, Now I see! Arcade!*

A fascinating future, Yes!?

Where's my hat? What's my hurry?

1988

WHO OWNS WHAT AND WHICH AND WHY

A Not So Trivial Pursuit

Who owns the month of July?

Who is the landlord of all October?

Who best paints the Royal Family of Old Spain?

Who is the Proprietor of The Woman through History?

Who created young Manhood for all to witness?

Whose Mary is the Mother of All Mothers in oil or marble?

Who, in sum, owns what and which and why?

And by *owning*, I mean writing or painting or sculpting or symphonically noting life on earth best. In all the territories of Art, inspired maniacs take over as the centuries pass. They stand tall, each in his own meadow, each in his own castle tower, each wondrously framed on the walls of crammed galleries or in the cool cathedral tombs, daring us to displace them.

Who owns what and which and why?

These are the questions that our Arts pose again and again, to be answered by critics, historians and your plain field-beast observer like myself. It is a grand shuttlecock exchange.

Join me.

Van Gogh owns all the sunflowers that ever sprouted from seed and ran their juices to turn their clock faces to follow noon.

Which means he owns the sun and a portion of summer, which he must share with some few Impressionists.

Valasquez and Goya with or above him, own the Royal Spanish faces; the gimlet eye and the toy-bulldog jaw, the smiling clenched terrier teeth, the crab-claw hands and the razor bones smothered in velvet and spider-draped with lace.

Who has best mapped and blueprinted the touch and temperature of women with palettes like warm seasons and fair breaths?

Botticelli.

But then do I hear a soft cry of *"Yes, but—!"*

Let us inspect the various aspects of women as revealed by men in a warm season.

The napes of women's necks? Best painted by—?

Degas? Somewhat.

Renoir? Perhaps.

But most certainly Manet, who sighed on the soft hairs behind their ears, watched them stir, and seized his brushes.

How often Manet genuflects
To the soft sweet napes of women's necks
While Renoir now our gaze directs
To ladies peach-fuzz frontal sex.
No matter; rear view or facade.
For both I thank a loving God.

Moving on, who has best glorified, gently etched, the Mother of all Mothers?

Da Vinci. His many cartoons and portraits of *The Virgin of the Rocks*.

More than portraits, these are women and mothers that summon our love temperately and unreservedly.

The sculpted Virgin?

Michelangelo's Pietà in St. Peter's.

Who has charted nightmare?

Goya, again, who flew night skies to charcoal witches and land with firing-squads to slay innocents.

Or Bosch's hell? We visit and revisit it, do we not, with delight?

Why not Callot's *Temptations of St. Anthony*?

The choice is hard.

The social/political/cultural hell is easier.

Hogarth! His surgeon's scalpel and etching knife pricks the pomps, pox and poisons of London life to drench his plates in acid and trap his grotesques in their terrible pantomimes forever.

Who has created the Eternal Young Man?

Michelangelo. Who knocked David out of the Italian quarries to stand against the sky.

Who owns Dr. Johnson?

Boswell.

Don Quixote?

Cervantes. Yes, but…

Even more, Gustave Dore.

Think of the Mad Don's windmills. Dore's etchings rise and stay.

Gargantua and Pantaguel?

Dore.

The Fables of La Fontaine?

Dore.

Others may have written them, but each of these literary works has been taken over, devoured, and delivered back to us by this extraordinary artist/illustrator.

Only think on these childhood books and Dore's bright heroes and dark frights jump forth. No one in history has so completely

dominated a literature with an all-seeing eye and unerring hand. He is The Ancient Mariner, Poe's Raven, Puss in Boots, Daniel in The Lion's Den, Hell's Lost Souls Sunk in Slime and Gargantua watering down Paris in a dry season.

Like Shakespeare's Caesar, Dore stands astride the Universe.

London, the *entire* city, is his. Every rooftop, dockside, coal bin, lamplit-lost child, ghost-beggar view? Yes!

Who has flowered the best jungles and peopled them with named beasts and finest wild men? Who has seen Mars clearly and ridden us there under the double moons with eight-legged thoats? Edgar Rice Burroughs. Tarzan. John Carter.

I have a *second* lease on Mars because of them.

Who serves Death best in drama?

Shakespeare.

Hamlet plays in an endless graveyard of tombs with funeral pageants that start in ghosts to end in suicides and murders. From darkness, vast quantities of light!

A breather here.

It's not, for God's sake, that any of these creators sets out to *purposely* own things! To give births so large they might outlast an age.

But a man with fevers, or a woman in love, is a man or woman furiously dedicated, isolated, concentrated. They don't even know they are making *the* metaphor to represent all ranunculuses or some girl's toes or some sun-god's pillared neck to survive forty thousand days. Love simplifies and casts out impurities. The end effect is The Take Over. By this forging, firing, and purifying, old ingots are re-cast as fresh and sometimes immoral beauties. Finally, the artist, the writer, the poet-dramatist owns not only what he has done but all the things it represents.

Let's list women.

In literature, who's got their number best?

Jane Austen, whose diminutive shadow thrown across Europe might upstage Tolstoy and his Anna Karenina? Then, the feminine spirit, in poetry, seems woven forever in the fragile warp and woof of Emily Dickinson.

Then here's Virginia Woolf, with novel and notebook, like Ophelia downstream, lost but to return in the library tides.

More quickly now.

Who created Henry VIII out of whole canvas?

Holbein, His Henry fattens our brain and cracks our mind. Here's truly a King to wrestle Francis I two falls out of three.

Where would Napoleon be without David?

Where would bullfights be minus Goya, and his stableboy,

Picasso?

Who has given us the weather of wind, sand and stars?

Saint Exupéry. Those high rivers of storm are his, to share with birds, to rip-cord a cloud and kite a romance.

Who owns all lands, soils and caves, with bones in the caves and dreams in the bones?

Loren Eiseley.

Who rebuilt the 39 cities of Troy, town on town, deep down into the dusts?

Schliemann.

The Libraries of the world may have been Carnegie built, but their landlord is Thomas Wolfe, who leaps through them in bull stampedes, climbing the stacks, prowling the literary fjords, crazed to think that life might end and ten thousand books go unread!

Who invented the first Time Machine?

H.G. Wells.

Whose *Invisible Man* is seen all year?

Need I say?

Whose submarine is our *Nautilus* today?

Verne, with Nemo, near a Mysterious Isle.

There will be none greater in the time of man.

Who smashes-and-grabs boys' souls?

Twain: And if his Tom's too clean, Huck's just their poison.

But Burroughs is best. So we list Tarzan again. Up to his hips in elephant dung, crowned with blood but no thorns, he chimpanzees our souls, tigers our nights and bares his fangs in all boys' smiles.

Shaw lifts a curtain and cries: "Here's *my* St. Joan!" And, burning, Joan gives her answer: "Yes!"

Shakespeare shadows forth a Richard III, who, shapes his hump, shouts "Much Thanks!"

Lawrence of Arabia, buried for some while beneath Arabian sands, is summoned forth on film by David Lean and runs before the wind to flaunt his robes.

October is chiseled from graveyard stones by Edgar Allen Poe. I and others have helped make the wreaths.

Who is highway commissioner to the roads, orchards, theaters and towns of France?

Why, Julius Caesar, marching north with his crocodile mascot at his ankle, along with his planters, seeders, architects, stone masons and actors with sun colors painting their cheeks.

Who has best husbanded eternity?

The Egyptians, yes? Who raised pyramids and buried golden forms and promised eternal life to boy kings and handsome queens?

All of this is stuff for lifetime arguments. You will have your

favorites. Name the names.

Who owns that empty highway at sunset down which a lone tramp figure goes?

Do I hear Charlie?

Who owns the beach at dawn, deserted but for one odd tourist lurching forth with a cocky summer hat and a jaunty pipe?

Hulot/Tatti on his forever Holiday, his wondrous form leaving footprints on the sand near the taffy machine as the tide goes out, and we weep for its sad return.

And so on and so forth, God bless us all, in all our arts, through all our days.

1990

TO BE TRANSPORTED

To be transported
To be moved
To be taken out of this world.

This incredible double metaphor describes what we wish to have done with our imaginations and, soon after, with our bodies.

What if you owned the greatest theater in the world and ran it like a dimestore drive-in with Queen of Outer Space movies?

What if you owned the greatest travel agency in the world and the greatest mode of travel yet invented by Einstein's relatives and Galileo's children, and ran it as if it were the Chicago/Miami overnight Pullman or the Las Vegas noontime train?

What would you call the theater?

Cape Kennedy

And what the method of transportation? The Apollo rockets and all that followed, on a downscale into the drywash empty launching pits. For here in one place we have the most stunningly dramatic main plus side-show in theatrical history. And here we have the:

Largest
Strongest
Loudest
Fastest

way of getting around the world in 80 minutes or less or to the Moon in just a few hours more. Yet the theater knows not itself. And the rocket gantries stand waiting, dust-blown, and speaking in quiet voices. How could we Americans, a declarative, moving people, allow this to happen? By what failure of Imagination and Will have we refused to use this man-made stage to act out our dreams for an incredible time ahead? With what faint heart have we placed King Kong's toy, the rocket, back in its delivery carton and mailed it to the dead-letter office? It is hard to believe that a quarter of a century has passed without NASA sensing that they were the owners and operators of:

The Greatest Show on Earth.
Ringling Brothers? Runts and pygmies.
Barnum and Bailey? Midgets and dwarfs!

Millions upon millions of people have thronged the Florida shores to look at the dark Christmas tree gantries, waiting for them to be lit to celebrate the birth of mankind into space.

Why not, every New Year's, all down the coast, string every still-

upright gantry with great starfalls of lights and at midnight beam in a fresh year with ten thousand illuminations?

Why not, at the base of the Space Shuttle gantry at twilight, nail up a grandstand where two thousand world-traveling visitors could see and hear, with cannon sound and hellfire light, a history of Space Travel? With the great gasping explosions of the Apollo rockets ricocheting onto the stands from a hundred sound units, and billows of electric fire and steam ascending the tower, suctioning a few thousand souls along for exhilarations.

A series of grandstands at a *series* of gantries. Part of the year, while the actual Shuttle prepares for leave-taking, the encircling territory is *verboten.* Move your audience then to the bleachers where the original Apollo ships banged up to crack the skies.

A rock concert, by God, for old folks. No. For the young. No. For *all* of us.

Unless you sit in the open and see the tall frameworks and know their true size and see the shadows of an illusion of spacecraft flashing starward, the soul cannot know what our hearts have dearly desired from the mouth of the cave to here to beyond Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, and Pluto.

Twenty-five years back I was privileged to stand outdoors in the Santa Susanna Mountains during a test fire of a one-hundred-thousand pound thrust engine. I was no more than three-hundred yards away when a Niagara of water plunged into the flame pit. Oxygen was ejected, ignition occurred. In that instant, God gasped a huge breath and exhaled it forth on us. I was thrust against a tin siding. That fiery proclamation pinned me, shook the blood in my veins, the crazy dreams in my head, and the doubt in my morrows, which flaked and fell away, gone forever.

I want that experience, that mighty fire-shout, to shake every citizen of our world. It is the shout that says Yes to night, time, and the universe, against some mighty No that frightens our Will and stills our possible hopes.

Along the way to 2001, why not, finally, at Cape Kennedy, on the night before our first manned ship to Mars, a gathering of actors, poets, kings, queens, Arab potentates, choirs from Vienna, London, Paris, Rome, and Salt Lake City, rabbis, priests, and clergy from several dozen denominations, and the Pope seated on an equal throne on a democratic dais with presidents and senators. All there to celebrate with word, song, pantomime, and symphony, man's independence of gravity and free-fall up into a hard-earned immortality?

With all our laws, inhibitions, cross purposes and alarms about Church and State, could NASA do this and not be outgrabbed by the

wrath of the ACLU?

Yes. If all the above sat at one big round table or celebrated from one big, nobody-bigger-than-any-body-else stage. And again, *yes*!

Foolish soul. Silly me.

Yet for what it's worth, I provision you with the dream and the tools.

Canaveral/Kennedy. Its theater lies empty, waiting, waiting, hungry to transport our flesh, and suffer our dreams to fulfillment.

Why do we linger in the wings?

What are we waiting for?

All systems say:

Go

1988

THE GREAT AMERICAN "WHAT AM I DOING HERE, AND WHY DID I BUY THAT?" HARDWARE STORE

As I think Lawrence of Arabia once should have said, "I cannot supply you with camels or still the desert winds, but I can build you a mighty nation with a mighty dream."

My somewhat more modest claim is to the title of Idea Man, a maunderer of notions who sometimes surprises himself at so-called brainstorming sessions.

I cannot blueprint you a building or rivet up a city… but I can, along the way, toss you a frivolous concept.

Such as:

The Great American "What Am I Doing Here, and Why Did I Buy That?" Hardware Store.

Rent me a space some 40-feet-wide by 70-feet-deep, with perhaps a cellar and maybe an empty attic where green garden hoses might coil like snakes, and I will hammer together the damndest late-night store in history.

Late night? Yes. I speak not for women, of course, though the peculiar frenzy I am about to describe may on occasion attack their reason and leave them trembling mad. But, consider—is there a sane man among you who hasn't at ten minutes after midnight, midsummer, suffered the terrible urge to rise and go now to the bee-loud Ennisfree lead pipe, hammer and tongs, door-hinge thingumabob glade? There, in a wild dazzlement, to buy and lug home all those things you've always dearly wanted and will never use?

There, you see? Gotcha!

It is the dream that dare not speak its name.

Now that the robot cat is out of the aluminum bag, let us proceed to open that midnight hardware shop where men sleepwalk and wives rush to pick their pockets to protect their life's savings.

What should the shop look like, outside and in?

Outside: a facade fount of bright gadgets, steel rickracks, brass scrimshaws, golden faucets, meteoric hammers, rainfalls of ice-trays, thumbtacks, hinges, corkscrews, nuts, bolts, and bandsaws. Looking up, we should, while staring hypnotically, murmur, "My God, there's one of those things with no name that I must have or I shall die."

Then, arms out stiffly, hands ready to snatch and grab, eyes glazed, in you go.

Past a facade, of course, that looks like the bright front side of a

silvered robot factory, past front windows heaped with treasure. Which is to say a machine that makes penny-fresh brand new nails, a largish mechanical hat from which a bodiless hand pulls forth some new technological miracle every fifteen seconds, your latest mop head, tomorrow morning's picture hangers, a Star Trek 2001 flashlight, some battery-operated mechanical vacuum mice that can run around the floor sucking dust, or, on occasion, an audio-animatronic rabbit with maniac eyes.

In the other front window, as you march by, siren-summoned, is an absolute viper pit of garden hoses, all sizes, identified as to country of origin, poisonous or non-poisonous, astir and ascramble, writhing to leap into your hand to freshen a garden and lay the dust.

Ready to step inside now? But wait!!!

There is a moment of trepidation. Fear glints in the eye. The palms grow sweaty. Why?

Well, most men are terrified, are they not, of shadowing the sill of any Berlitz shop that teaches French? So are most of us fearful of thresholding hardware emporiums because, while we may have a love object in mind, we rarely know the name of the damned thing.

It follows then that your prescient 2001 doodad shop must post a sign above the front door:

HARDWARE SPOKEN HERE

—so as to lull the panic and entice the shy buck-antelope.

Once inside, the labels of everything must be super-size, with perhaps a genealogy of where the blasted name came from in the first place.

But again, hesitation on the sill…

Should one go home and wake the ever-receptive son, that boy capable of infection by this midnight disease?

For let's face it, don't the rites of passage include a patriotic American father double-marching his lad to the nearest glue-bottle, whitewash, lawnmower, scythe and tack-gun place, to teach him how to buy junk and horde trash? And, if the boy doesn't cotton to this, shouldn't he be loaned out to an orphanage or stashed at a mean uncle's?

No matter. Right now, it's twenty after midnight. The shop will only be open another two hours, better hurry…

Inside now, what do we see?

Displays of hardware, like rare jewels.

Aren't some of them close to being those objects d'art that old man Fabergé crafted for the Czar? Why not, in our new shop here, showcase on velvet pillows a golden sieve, brass washer earrings that might become necklaces? Plus a bathroom plunger fit to be carried at a king's coronation or the beehive crowning of a Pope? And, framed in

wall tuck-ins, the museum masterpieces that Raymond Loewy spawned when asked to redesign the Mixmaster, the telephone, or the 1929 pencil sharpener? And all through the store those surpassingly beautiful electric fans. The ones that look like Maserati wire-wheels, with sky-blue blades, whirring, and whispering to you as you pass:

Touch Me. Buy Me. Sneak Me Home.

Once around the shop, reading and touching and you're ready for the old hot toddy and cold shower. Your wallet fibrillates.

Over here, for instance, we find one of those wondrous mirror-wells, reflecting dishes in which copper pennies or silver dollars seem to float suspended in mid-air. Reach out to seize the coin—it's not there! Optical illusion. Well, then, instead of coins, why not a super-size, optical-illusion well on the surface of which, changing day by day, floats the latest screwdriver, monkeywrench, or one-thousand-day light bulb?

What a grand way to focus attention on all the latest damn fool devices that funnel into our computer-chips-for-breakfast lives.

There are other ways to show-and-tell, of course.

Why not more display boards on which you hang fresh varietals of gimcracks, thingumabobs, and whatchamacallits, wired for sound? Press the tab and a friendly robot voice tells you just what in blazes the spotlighted object is. Saves you the blush of addressing your ignorance to the nearest clerk who studied Contempt at Tiffany's.

How else will our 2001 Hardware Shop differ from just yesterday's egg-whisk, carpet beater, washboard emporium? Somewhere won't we collide with the Radio Shack Video Vortex Shops and sell VHS tapes on woodworking, picture hanging, and how to speak to a thumb that has just been hammered?

What about computer graphics, electronic imaging?

What Vasarely and Mondrian did with rulers, T squares and compasses is now being toothpaste-tubed out by mindless electronic machines that see not, feel not, but deliver beauty.

Wouldn't our store need one art gallery wall for all the latest "batteries included" dreams.

Then, men who wouldn't be caught Déco in an art gallery might whisper "curiouser and curiouser" if they passed a kaleidoscopic graphic image light show, and discover it was done not by a crazed dropout but by a hairless computer.

And stay on to be further victimized by very high frequency clerks.

Stay on to buy laser equipment for the Mad Dad in his high-voltage basement. Holograms, homegrown, for the Grandpa who wants to stare around the sides and over the tops of his monstrous offspring.

So why not, since it is a toy shop to begin with, focus attention on the latest toys, perhaps only one or two centralized and spotlighted amidst the scrapers, varnishers and paint removers? For instance, any human in his or her right mind has got to want the latest etch-a-sketcher, yes? You not only etch your own sketch, but press a button and fabulous patterns are added electronically to your original art.

Or how about a Little Loader? Been around for years but still running fresh. It's the set where you construct a plastic railway on which a battery-operated hopper runs back and forth picking up and delivering "rocks" over a circuitous track. Damn thing runs for hours back and forth. Better than watching paint dry. Owned one for years. Run it for my cats on Sundays. Gave one of these to a local orchestra conductor years ago. She has been my slave ever since.

No, don't turn the hardware shop into a Toy Emporium, but, as I say, bring in one or two new and imaginative Japanese inspirations per month, retiring the old, and you've got that added éclat every shop yearns for.

But… *attendez*!

I have saved the best for last.

Consider the territory underfoot, the floor of our not-so-far future fish-hook and Singer sewing-machine-bobbin' emporium.

Why, look. Can it be? It is!

The Floor Is Transparent

Laid out in largish squares of see-through plastic glass, it is an immense film, tape or TV screen on which images can be projected from below!

Entering the shop at high noon or dinner time (best time to shop when all those damn fool customers won't get in the way) you walk on firefalls of lava, erupting volcanoes, Dante's hell-factory poured steel and red-hot ironworks. All the fires on earth, earth-born or man-made furnaces, are there to tread. You walk the white-hot coals where the metal emerges to become all the stuffs in the magical windows outside, or laid out in laser-beam explosions up above.

You are seemingly suspended then on a history of mankind's attraction to, conquering, and usage of—fire. Over there, an ancient cave fire-shadows a stone wall. Next over, the flames that baked the brick cities of Babylon and Athens and Rome, and shaped the weapons that locust-scourged the air. And here the Renaissance bonfires that ignited knowledge and illuminated history. And just next, the simple straw blazes that exhaled warm breath to fill paper pears and lift the Montgolfier brothers into the skies over France.

And here the thunderous exhaust of the Apollo rockets, with their bright roars, heading back up to the first fire, our sun.

Well now, by God, don't tell me you won't rise at midnight to go

barefoot on that Hindu fakir's fire-walking hot-dog bed.

Frame the whole picture again. The fabulous harvest bins of eager and itching tools, the cobra viper pits, the attic filled with a history of discards, the basement waiting with its winepresses, and the transparent floor to Caesar-stride as you load up with goodies and wander home, wondering what hit you.

Would you not, once home, dial a number and say, "Sorry, Ralph. Know it's late. But, I just came back from walking half an acre of blazing charcoal, fireflies, and the great Andromeda nebula. The address? Well—"

Well, there you have it. I told you I would not, like Peter O'Toole, build you a better camel or even a greater nation.

But I can dream you a new home away from home.

And send you off with a pocket full of jingling brass and a mouthful of nails.

This way to the lovely mad house.

1987

THE AESTHETICS OF SIZE

A Twilight Museum Blueprint

From the ridiculous to the magnificent to the sublime.

From King Kong to Apollo 11 to Michelangelo.

By what route, under what circumstance?

I have often told friends to go see King Kong, the terrific, the wondrous.

Nonsense! they cry, having seen him. Not so!

Indeed not, I respond. Because you saw Kong *only* on a home television screen. My 50-foot ape was chopped down to your 12-inch-high dwarf.

Similarly, space travel from Canaveral to the Moon and Mars is starved and withered, the great candle melted, giving up three hundred long feet to matinee star in *Hop O' My Thumb*.

Kong belongs on cinema walls, in his proper dimension.

Apollo II should climb the stars in Imax or Omnimax theaters.

And how does this Aesthetic of Size apply to Michelangelo, Titian or Raphael?

Viewed in the galleries where they hang, full-size in multifold glories, one thing.

Up close, in library books, another.

Wrong size.

The trouble is you hold art in *your* hands. But, consider, shouldn't it be that the art within those books should hold you in *its* hands?

May I solve the problem?

Let us build the first color-slide projection art gallery in history.

A good-size gallery, lit only from behind a series of twelve or fourteen projection screens. And on these screens, as we wander a room some 40- or 50-feet-long by 30-feet-wide, let us project the finest landscapes by Monet, the napes of lovely women's necks by Manet, or the summer-ripe peach ladies of Renoir.

And all in their original size.

Which is what our slide-projection gallery is all about.

And not just a dozen Renoirs or Monets, but *everything* they painted or drew!

Which is the *other* thing our gallery would be about.

Because of the size, shape, weight and number of paintings by the world's greatest artists, packing, shipping and hanging them by the tens of thousands is, if not impossible, incredibly expensive and time-consuming.

But, with a few small cartons of color slides, you can air-mail Picasso anywhere, set him up and have him hung within an hour.

Multiplicity is one thing. Size, to repeat myself, is another.

Your average art lover cannot possibly guess, reading the measurements of a Botticelli or Veronese coffee-table book, just how large the stunning originals are!

But now, for the first time, the non-travelers of the world will be knocked back on their heels when they enter our, you might say, camera obscura environment to find Botticelli's *Seasons* towering, and Veronese's *Disciples* looming, over them.

"My God!" the common cry will be, "are the great paintings of the world all *that* immense!?"

Not all, no. Some. Quite a few.

And heretofore unseen, or if seen, melted down to hand-mirror size and trapped in books, beautiful and small, instead of ten times more beautiful and perhaps a hundred times larger than the lives that pass through these galleries to be changed, enroute, forever.

Why bother?

Well, even in this jet-travel time, millions will not fly about the world, millions will still be stay-at-homes in 2001. It will be for them, as it was in the time of Victoria and Albert and their incredible Curators, that we will build our twilight museum. The Queen and her Prince truly cared for the general population, and so shipped home treasures to please the shopkeeper and thrill the barmaid.

Then, too, there will always be the jet-traveler, who will hunger for a large size memory refreshment. Anyone in need of a proper Monet fix, or a Seurat eye-dazzlement can ramble to our just-before-sunrise, just-after-dark-shadow gallery, and watch as a dozen and then a hundred and then a thousand bright images come up in waves, like tides on an amazingly endless shore.

Stroll in our twilight gallery and see twelve portraits for half an hour. Or touch a button, stay for three hours, and see every mind-numbing grotesque painting that Dali ever imagined while driving horizonless highways without his car.

Technical problems?

Plenty.

But we have moved into a high-tech world, where the quality of photography, color slides, projectors and screens should insure us of high-resolution delivery.

Not just another head-on slide show. But a gallery-seeming experience, where you are surrounded on all sides, by the imagination of the artist, a gymnasium where his whole life's work can perform endlessly for art critic, passionate art lover, or your merest student from first grade to senior high.

Well, there you have it. A garden of ever-changing delights. Or a fountain that runs in colors and changes shapes through noons, mid-afternoons and nights. A gift to all who will never travel. A loving reminder, to those who have, of what they left behind in Florence, in Rome, in Paris, and all across the world.

Can we collect these photographic bouquets and rearrange them and hand them back as celebrations on no particular day for no particular reason, save beauty itself?

Might as well ask if Monet can make the sun climb the cathedral facades at dawn, dazzle the battlements in the late day, and bronze them with a golden flesh as the sun vanishes.

Monet, borrowing from the history before Time cried: “Light!” And there was Light.

Why can’t we do the same?

1987

YESTERMORROW PLACE

Symbology of a University

We have all strolled through colleges and noted that the library is here, the art gallery there, the museum next door, and the classrooms and theater just beyond. Often, we found libraries sharing quarters with certain colleges. But if two or three of the above-mentioned environments happen in one building, they are separated in confines that shut out people rather than invite them in.

Imagine, instead, what I call a Yestermorrow architecture, imaginative enough and large enough to enclose everything in a single structure.

And one, I might add, that lures, calls, leads, and pulls you from one area to the next.

Imagine…

An art gallery enclosing
a museum, enclosing
a library, enclosing
a university, enclosing
a theater.

Five concepts,
five environments,
five ways of seeing life.
Each circling,
each rounding the other.

The outer circle, the art galleries, would illustrate all of the metaphors to be found as you move inward.

The second circle would display all the artifacts of our various histories in a museum round.

The third enclosure would be the library.

Followed by the inner round of the classrooms.

And at last, the theater.

Why a theater at our architectural core?

Well, isn't life one drama topping another? Isn't *everything* theater?

Everything, that is, from courting rituals to marriage ceremonies, to office space, to town plaza, to rocket pad at Canaveral?

Try to imagine any human activity that does not finally shape itself into vivid metaphors spoken, acted, taught.

What we have here then is a series of incredible cups, round boxes, a five-shelled wagon train circled to shield us from the night.

Again, stepping through from circle to circle, what would we find?

The paintings, lithographs and watercolors that portray humanity in private encounters or *en masse.*

Natural life itself as delivered to us by archaeologists and anthropologists from tarpits or Troy ruins.

And then all the massed bricks of the wondrously mysterious library where one can monkey-climb the stacks to Kilimanjaro leopard, Everest snow, or Alpha Centauri immortality.

Giving the onionskin another peel—the university.

Small perhaps, under the circumstances, but containing a dozen rooms where a dozen subjects, relating to the surrounding totality, are delivered forth.

And then at the sounding heart, the voices of dramatic theater, or your special vibrant professor, or your teaching-tool cinema, repeating in yet other forms, the truth collided with on your way around or on your way in.

An architecture, in sum, it seems to me, as marvelous as those rounded self-encircling nautilus shells found along the shores of our seas.

Easy to build? In the mind, yes. With glass, brick, stone, and mortar? Difficult. And expensive.

But if finally blueprinted, built and sent down the ways to ride the mid-oceanic grass of a California university garden, what a place to travel, wander, and stay. What a pomegranate experience. What an incredible womb, finally, in which to grow ideas and rear young and old children.

Will it be built between now and the century's end? And in the one hundred years beyond, can it be the most imaginative teaching hearth ever built to warm our minds?

I say it can be done.

I wish it to be so.

1988

YES, WE'LL GATHER AT THE RIVER

L.A. Pedestrians, Arise!

We've all heard the words to the old and familiar spiritual "Yes, We'll Gather at the River," and, indeed, in a few years, if we do not gather at the actual rim, we will put ourselves together near the river. We speak, of course, of the L.A. river, which channels dry wind and warm dust through most of our Southern California year.

And, yes, we will gather, if we plan it well, at a riverbed of now-isolated communities in downtown Los Angeles—those areas being Little Tokyo, Olvera Street, Chinatown, and the intermingled Italian commercial isles.

Created separately by different customs in various years, these proofs of our immigrant past stand but a few hundred yards apart. Yet they might as well be separated by tens of miles for all the mixing or lack of mixing between these towns within a city.

Rarely do the inhabitants of the three or four communities stroll from one to the other. Rarely do tourists, abandoning their cars, ricochet happily from one immigrant duchy to the next.

All that must change.

What is missing at this moment in time? The almost forgotten pedestrian of yesteryear. Who removed his legs and turned off his lights?

We did, by neglect, surely not by plan.

To see what we have done wrong and what can be renovated right, the simplest stroll through London, Paris or Rome will reveal the paucity of our imagination, and the need to rejuvenate curiosity and the delight that is derived from walking mile after mile and relishing the mileage.

Consider: we fly nine-thousand miles for the privilege of walking our shoes off in those cities. Then we return to feast ourselves along two paltry city blocks in our cars.

How come?

The answer, of course, is that Paris is a continuous river of fascination, an assault of delight. The eye, the ear, and the culinary nose are bombarded on every hand by color, light, sound and the scent of breads and foods adrift from one thousand bakeries and twenty thousand restaurants. The same, on a smaller scale, holds true for London, Rome, Vienna and Madrid.

Can we borrow and learn from the humane and delightful customs of these cities, to insure that our downtown immigrant isles

do not remain closeted but become part of a tributary-flow of Angelenos and emigres from Iowa? Can we break the dams that hold the people back from participating in the old adventure of walking?

Yes! Imagine with me:

Let us use the Music Center plaza on Bunker Hill as our possible starting place. Fill it with more chairs, tables and a clutch of outdoor wine, coffee and sandwich places. Then build a bridge across Hope Street so that pedestrians could stream down past that fine, roaring fountain, which most people have never seen, along the rarely-discovered mall. Said mall to be strung with miniature lights and filled, every few yards, with new curio shops, bookstalls and miniature sandwich places, so that the pedestrian is lured on to reach Broadway.

There our yellow brick road, for that is what it might start out as, would turn north. In turning it would become a Mexican/South American river of bright inlaid tiles, recalling the esplanade along the seafront in Rio. This stream of brilliant tiles would lead us through a refurbished section of Broadway to turn east on First to lead us a few blocks to Little Tokyo. Along the way, the tiles would gradually change shape and color until they become the symbols of the Land of the Rising Sun, the dragons of history, which will flow, still under a canopy of miniature lights, past yet other small shops, so that our curiosity is unending. We would hasten shopping through Little Tokyo and emerge into a long serpentine of walk, which would lead us to Union Station.

There our "yellow brick road," our "mosaic pedestrian pathway," would deliver us to Olvera Street and then, in the river of lights and new fine foodstalls, along North Broadway through Sicilian-Italian archways and finally another dragon-dance of inlaid walks, this time Chinese, until we reach Mandarin and Szechuan country…

All this on a double-size walk that would be arbored with ivy and flowers, an arched shade from the sun. Then, a safe route by night, festooned by thousands of miniature lights. Along the way, your quick or easy walker/tourist would meander past curio cubbies, bookstalls, and portable pushcart spreads of graphic arts, lithographs, etchings, and watercolors from every land. Similar to the miles of book, magazine, poster, and postcard stalls along the Seine in Paris with, here or there, your honorable hot dog, bagel or lemonade/wine-cooler establishment. So your ever-curious, ever-wandering, old-fashioned walker would be led on under ivies and illuminations, with much to provoke delight on all sides. The old auto would be gladly abandoned and forgotten. A New Year would arrive when tens of thousands of surprised folk would stare down and cry, "My God! I have *feet*!"

So there you have our new Los Angeles river, beyond the old, fixed to the land, illuminated on all sides, crackling with curiosities,

and adrift with scents from four continents. In this astonishing, new riverbed, flowing in twin tides day and night, in opposite directions, would stroll, walk, hustle, or who knows… even jog, the once lost tribes of pedestrians locked out of motion and pleasure by too many decades of the city dreams neglected and the waiting, ready, and eager walkabouts stranded on curbs.

We might even have a mariachi leaving every half hour from the Music Center to run the new emigres from Corn City and Hoboken down the hill.

But eliminate Bunker Hill if you wish, concentrate only on the bright creek, the compelling dry wash that would push and pull imaginations, young and old, to bounce off Tokyo but to land in Mexico City, rebound from Rome and land at last in echoes of Beijing.

What a gift to give ourselves as strangers to the streets.

Our legs? Restored!

Our *élan*? Revived.

Our lives returned to an old and familiar way of glorious living.

Can we do this, and make a vital bed through which our futures flow high-tide?

I'll run ahead.

You come, too.

1988

GO NOT TO GRAVEYARDS

Seek Me at Soane's

It is a Time Machine, it is a vestibule, it is a basement, it is a garret, it is an immense garage sale of history. And it is, finally, the three- or four-level tombstone monument to one of the orneriest architectural geniuses of the nineteenth century.

Look beyond this paragraph. Gaze upon my favorite museum in all of London.

I have used Soane's digs as my letterhead for some fifteen years. New friends or fans, writing across country, ask, with some excitement, if that is my home, my stately mansion.

Oh, my soul, how I wish it were.

I would *live* in those upper stories…

To be *buried* in that basement!

You see that Egyptian tomb, lower left? That's it. File me there, with bread and onions, for eternity!

But, no, the place is not mine. It belonged and *still* belongs to the spirit of soaring dreamer and super-crank, John Soane, who rebuilt London in his lantern mind, then stepped forth to rebuild the real. It so affected me, on my first visit in 1969, that I wrote:

> Go not to graveyards,
> Seek me at Soane's,
> There stash my bones, there plant my ghost?
> Where Baroque and Rococo-Medieval breathe dust?
> Where lust is a canvas, the Hogarths well-hung,
> And symbolled sarcophagus nests in a lair.
> Where the madness of Soane fixed odd junk everywhere
> But, *what junk*! From the tables and tombs
> And the rooms of old kings,
> Antique fables, stone myths, death-watch beetles,
> Lost rings
> From the toy chest of Caesar…
> Ruins the etched Piranesi put by:
> A site of Bernini
> A sketch by Bellini
> The crown of a queen
> The mask of a king
> Oh, any old thing
> Cached here on impermanent loan

When they captured the fancy of Sir John Soane.

Why do I go on in this fashion about Soane?

Because most of you, driving or walking about London, have passed within a few paces of Number 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields without sensing you were nearly onto a tall narrow cubbyhole of genius.

While you were busy fending elbows and exhausting your midsummer patience at the National Gallery or the Tate, I was walking, cool and solitary, through the levels of John Soane's archaeological finds, his Time Machine of collectibles.

The test comes, of course, in that moment when standing amidst this fantastic rummage sale of centuries, one thinks: What would I steal *first*?!

Everything!

So it is with Soane's basement-tombyard, uppertower stash-bin environment. You wish to live *and* die there. A pretty rash decision.

During a very long lifetime, Soane was professor of architecture at the Royal Academy, and was commissioned to design the Bank Stock Office, the Rotunda at the Bank, and other large public buildings. These included the Law Courts, The Privy Council Offices, as well as the King's Robing room and the Royal Academy of the House of Lords.

But the heart soars and cracks when viewing his plans for a Triumphal Bridge, a dream construction of such high imagination that it won Soane the Gold Medal of the Royal Academy when he was only twenty-three years old.

And all the while he lived out his crustacean life in the accreted shell which was his mansion, his museum, and a mausoleum for dead things, which come alive as you pass.

Most of what he sketched up, line by line and stone by stone, has long since been demolished, a process whereby the ugly replaced the beautiful or halfway-decently handsome. What war could not do, pismire ant men with their unfeeling antennae took apart at an architectural picnic some few decades ago. Soane's marble children now lie with Piranesi's rubble.

All the more dreadfully apt because upstairs, there on the right, find the gallery where Piranesi's Prisons and Roman Stone Gardens are closeted. There also find Hogarth's wicked-fox, mean-otter, poisonous ginmill bum-catchers and pox-collectors, who ferment in unsocial gatherings. Hogarth's maniac idiots might well have brought Soane down, if they had been on-scene and he had barred their way.

There is a splendid architectural monograph published in 1983 by the Academy Editions of St. Martin's Press, which should afford you the opportunity to meet this amazing spirit. There you will find the

work of his incredibly evocative collaborator/illustrator J.M. Gandy. His pictorials are breathtaking in their color, light and shadow.

But two problems arise. One glance through the book is enough to make you Concorde off to London: an expensive compulsion, but understandable. The second problem, as I have said, is more serious: most of the glorious architectures dreamed by Soane and so capably delineated and colored by Gandy are long since vanished.

The final reward is, of course, the Museum itself, where Soane's Athens-and-Rome, pretending to be London, live on. Number 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields will be around to the end of our century and long after. This being true, allow me to end my article with a last quote from that poem written eighteen years ago after my first encounter with that vertical tombyard:

> All of it splendid, all of it fine,
> Stash me like mummy, hide me like wine.
> There tuck my remnants, there toss my bones,
> Go not to graveyards, seek me at Soane's.

1987

DAY AFTER TOMORROW

Why Science Fiction?

A few years ago I wrote a short novel entitled *Fahrenheit 451*, which told the story of a municipal department in the year 1999 that came to your house to *start* fires, instead of to put them out. If your neighbors suspected you of reading a mildly subversive book, or any book at all for that matter, they simply turned in an alarm. The hose-bearing censors then thundered up in their red engines and squirted kerosene on your books, your house, and sometimes on you. Then a match was struck. This short novel was intended as science fiction.

Elsewhere in the narrative I described my Fire Man arriving home after midnight to find his wife in bed afflicted with two varieties of stupor. She is in a trance, a condition so withdrawn as to resemble catatonia, compounded of equal parts of liquor and a small Seashell thimble-sized radio tucked in her ear. The Seashell croons and murmurs its music and commercials and private little melodramas for her alone. The room is silent. The husband cannot even try to guess the communion between Seashell and wife. Awakening her is not unlike applying electric shock to a cataleptic.

I thought I was writing a story of prediction, describing a world that might evolve in four or five decades. But only a few years later, in Beverly Hills one night, a husband and wife passed me, walking their dog. I stood staring after them, absolutely stunned. The woman held in one hand a radio the size of a cigarette package, its antenna quivering. From this sprang tiny copper wires, which ended in a dainty cone that plugged into her right ear. There she was, oblivious to man and dog, listening to far winds and whispers and soap-opera cries, sleepwalking, helped up and down curbs by a husband who might just as well not have been there. This was *not* science fiction. This was a new fact in our changing society.

As you can see, I must start writing very fast indeed about our future world in order to stand still. I thought I had raced ahead of science, predicting the radio induced semi-catatonic. In the long haul, science pulled abreast, tipped its hat, and fed me the dust. The woman with the radio thimble crammed in her ear that night symbolized my failure to count on certain psychological needs that demanded satisfaction earlier than I supposed.

Whether or not my ideas on censorship via the fire department will be old hat by this time next week, I don’t know. Some nights, when the wind is right, the future smells of kerosene.

All of the above long prologue leads up to the simple fact that I very much enjoy, I *relish,* writing science fiction.

There is a great serious fun for the writer in asking himself: when does an invention stop being a reasonable escape mechanism—for we must all evade the world and its crushing responsibilities at times—and start being a paranoically dangerous device? How much of any one such invention is good for a person, bad for a person, fine for this man, fatal to the next?

So much depends, of course, on what the individual *hears* when he gives himself over to the electronic tides breaking on the shore of his Seashell. The voice of conscience and reason? An echo of morality? A new thought? A fresh idea? A morsel of philosophy? Or bias, hatred, fear, prejudice, nightmare, lies, half-truths, and suspicions? Or, perhaps even worse, the sound of one emptiness striking hollowly against yet another and another emptiness; broken at two-minute intervals by a jolly commercial, preferably in rhymed quatrains or couplets?

In writing a science fiction story around such an idea, the author must consider many things. Is there, for instance, a delicate interplay where the society does not crush the individual but where the individual realizes that without his cooperation society would fly to pieces through the centrifugal force of anarchy? Is the programming on such an ear-button receiver of a caliber to enable a man to be a gyroscope, both taking from and giving to society, beautifully balanced? Does it tell him what to do *every* hour and *every* minute of *every* day? Or, fearing knowledge of any sort, tell him nothing, and spoon-feed him mush? The challenge and the fun come in handling all the above ideas and materials in such a way as to predict how perversely or how well man will use himself, and therefore his mechanical extensions, in the coming time of our lives.

It is both exciting and disconcerting for a writer to discover that man's machines are *indeed* symbols of his own most secret cravings and desires, extra hands put out to touch and reinterpret the world. The machines themselves are empty gloves into which a hand, either cold and excessively bony, or warm, full-fleshed, and gentle, can be inserted. The hand is always the hand of man, and the hand of man can be good or evil, while the gloves themselves remain amoral.

The problem of good and evil fascinates, then, especially when it is to be found externalized and purified in the thousands of semi-robots we are using and will use in the coming century. Our atomic knowledge destroys cancer or men. Our airplanes carry passengers or jellied-gasoline bombs. The hairline, the human, choice is there. Before us today we see the aluminum and steel and uranium chess pieces, which the interested science fiction writer can hope to move

about, trying to guess how man will play out the game.

This, I think, should answer why I have more often than not written stories which, for a convenient label, are called science fiction. There are few literary fields, it seems to me, that deal so strikingly with themes that concern us all today; there are few more exciting genres, there are none fresher or so full of continually renewed and renewable concepts.

It is, after all, the fiction of ideas, the fiction where philosophy can be tinkered with, torn apart, and put back together again; it is the fiction of sociology and psychology and history compounded and squared by time. It is the fiction where you may set up and knock down your own political and religious and moral states. It can be a high form of Swiss watchmaking. It *can* be poetry. It *has* resulted in some of the greatest writing in our past, from Plato and Lucian to Sir Thomas More and François Rabelais and on down through Jonathan Swift and Johannes Kepler to Poe and Edward Bellamy and George Orwell.

If you try to cram philosophical and sociological theories into the non-science fiction tale, you more often than not wind up with more crust than filling. It takes a very agile writer indeed to keep a book together under such conditions. But in the story of prediction, at its best, you are given leave to act out your problem in easily stage-managed symbols, in allegories, if you wish. It isn't necessary to stop for long-winded explanations of philosophical or sociological climates. Simply by showing your real characters living and dying against your fresh background, the reader can guess an entire and different world, can feel it come alive through an osmotic literary process, which is often exceptionally subtle. Science fiction, then, does one the favor of making outsize images of problems so they can be seen and handled from all sides like those Easter balloons strung along the avenue by Macy's each year.

Over and above everything, the writer in this field has a sense of being confronted by dozens of paths that move among the thousand mirrors of a carnival maze, seeing his society imaged and re-imaged and distorted by the light thrown back at him. Without moving anything but his typewriter, that immensely dependable Time Machine, the writer can take those paths and examine those billion images. Where are we going? Well, first let us see where we've *been.* And let us ask ourselves what we *are* at this very hour. Fortified with this knowledge, nebulous at most, the writer's imagination selects the first path.

Would you like to know how a Communist government might run the United States? A fascist clique? A government of matriarchs? Novels exist covering all these subjects. What if all parents gave over

the education of their children entirely to machines? Or if a law was passed forbidding pedestrians in the year 2001? Why travel to the Moon or Mars if we only continue our wars there with Russia or China or Africa? Why build rockets at all? For fun? For adventure? Or is this the same process that sends the salmons back upstream year after year to spawn and die—a subliminal urge in mankind to spread, in self-preservation, to the stars? Are we then secretly fearful that one day the sun might freeze and the earth grow cold or the sun explode in a terrific thermal cataclysm and burn down our house of cards? And is all this space-travel talk nothing more than the human race itself seeing to it that it survives when survival means getting off a single, unstable planet and seeding space to its farthest boundaries, where no natural catastrophe, no congealing of sun or passing comet, can destroy man? Is self-preservation, then, our prime mover, and all our speechifying about adventure and fun and a New West in the Sky so much rationalization?

I know I cannot answer the above questions. But I also know I am endlessly fascinated with these questions, minor as they may seem to some, or pompous as they may seem to others. And many, including myself, are having a go at answering them, in the science fiction field. Here are a few more:

How do you go about converting a group of non-materialist, utterly alien Martians to the Methodist conviction? If you find a race of dogs or cows on Mars with I.Q.'s verging on 190, capable of carrying on highly enlightened and logical conversations on social and metaphysical topics, where does this put the Christian faith relative to its dictum that dogs and cows do not have souls of transferable value? If these dogs and cows are morally aware and *responsible for their actions*, that is supposedly the test one must pass in order to be credited with a soul. Well, then, one is tempted to ask the Christian religion to point out that exact moment in the history of dogdom and cowdom on Mars when they stopped being brutes without souls and became equal and perhaps superior to man, thus inheriting the soul as a blessed gift.

I ask these questions both in good humor and in all seriousness. I ask them simply because some time soon they must be answered. The day of the rocket is not so distant that we can delay longer in answering some of them. It will be very embarrassing if we find on far worlds not only that the Adam and Eve legend is the myth we suspected it to be but that Mr. Darwin, too, has been thrown bodily out the window by the things we find on that far world. Science and religion might *both* run in circles, like broken toys, momentarily confronted with such factual heresy.

Not that we won't be able to adjust to any problems met at home

or abroad in the solar system in 1999. We *will* adjust. But I also think our adjustment will derive in part from our practicality in both entertaining ourselves with science fiction and looking to our answers now, while still it is afternoon. These problems are human problems, which all too soon will no longer be science-fictional but part of a past history our children will read. I consider none of the above questions improbable or impossible. I consider them very probable and possible indeed.

Consider the similarity of two books—Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*, laid in our recent past, and George Orwell's *1984,* set in a future now behind us. Once we were poised between the two, between a dreadful reality and an unformed terror, trying to make such decisions as would avoid the tyranny of the very far right and the tyranny of the very far left; the two of which can often be seen coalescing into a tyranny pure and simple, with no qualifying adjective in front of it at all.

Space, which is very large indeed, is not the only huge thing that stands before man. Bigness in all its forms towers above us—bigness in religion, bigness in the fields of communication, labor, corporative enterprise, and government. No sooner has the private citizen warded off the millstone wheel of one Juggernaut than another lumbers on stage. Compared to other ages, in which man hid from a single Giant here or a Titan there, we are living, it cannot be denied, in a year when every one of us must stand ready, alone, axe in hand, by the Beanstalk.

Science fiction, it has been suggested, could possibly be the axe, which on occasion might hew as much as half an inch of fibrous material from certain Beanstalks. I do not know whether it has ever killed, maimed, or even bruised a Giant. I do not know whether it can be a sling to send the pebble against the brow of Goliath for the millions of Davids alive and put-upon today. I would not dare to say that it is probably the literature of warning or that it might be the dream that can help ward off the nightmare. Too many have claimed too much for science fiction already. And there is no charting agency available to show how much literature goes into the minds and, years later, works down and comes out through the hands of acting individuals.

I know only that there isn't a time, when I've had a really good night's sleep and am clear-headed, that I haven't thought of science fiction and been excited and concerned with its function, minor if you wish, both as fresh entertainment and as morality cloaked in symbol and allegory.

Certainly I have often wished that a new name might be applied to this field, since the old name has grown shopworn in the service of

bug-eyed monsters and half-naked space women. But there seems to be no way to avoid that, and new writers coming into the field will have to carry the burden of the old label until someone provides a better one, in this land where everything must *absolutely* have a label.

Even as I finish this article, our civilization is thinking about the future and pouring it into molds to harden and become the newer machines, which will further prove that, in motion, mankind's ability to externalize his loves and hates, thus more quickly building or destroying his culture, is seemingly inexhaustible. As long as "science fiction" can keep me alert to all this, I'll go on writing it. And I'll go on as long as there is gusto and zest in the writing; for if it should ever become completely and bodily nothing but self-important social and political prediction, I think I would become bored, and my reader bored, too.

I once strongly suspected that fun was the handmaiden, if not the progenitor, of the arts: now I *know* this for certain. And with a great sense of pleasure and personal well-being I intend to continue in the field for a good many years along with those others who are interested in trying to find a bridge to permanently cross that vast gulf of communication for all of us. I do not know whether tomorrow's street will be full of human beings with Seashell thimble-size radios whispering in their ears and all the world and its problems moved away from and neglected. Or whether by some miracle we may all carry supersonic stethoscopes with us on our rounds, so that each may know the sound of every other human heart. I only know that it would be interesting to walk on that street and think about it and write about it, before that evening sun goes down.

1953

This article, read by Italian Renaissance scholar Bernard Berenson, caused him to invite RB to Florence.

THE RENAISSANCE PRINCE AND THE BAPTIST MARTIAN

The whole affair had its ridiculous side, especially for the year 1953 when it occurred. Why should the world's foremost authority on the Italian Renaissance start a correspondence with a fairly suspicious and relatively unknown writer of Martian gobbledygook and science-fictional claptrap?

It was, after all, not the Space Age—that was light-years off in some impossible year. When I dared leave fruit-and-nut country, as California was referred to by some, to invade New York, I often found myself at literary parties introduced as good old Buck Rogers or Flash in the flesh.

Very uneasy times indeed. My books, as with most science fiction in those years, went mostly unreviewed, or popped up among the obits in the back of the *New York Times*.

All the more incredible then, in the midst of those low-profile years, that the Italian Renaissance authority did indeed write to Jules Verne's bastard son, and here run the facts:

In early May of that year, I had written an article in *The Nation* defending my strange preoccupation with technologies and space travel.

On June first I opened my mailbox to find a letter on which in a spidery hand these words were inked: B. Berenson, I Tatti, Settignano, Firenze.

I turned to my wife, saying, "Good Lord, this can't be from *the* Berenson, can it?"

"For God's sake," said Maggie. "Open it!"

I did and read:

> Dear Mr. Bradbury:
>
> In eighty-eight years of life, this is the first fan letter I have written.
>
> It is to tell you that I have just read your article in *The Nation*—"Day After Tomorrow."
>
> It is the first time I have encountered the statement by an artist in any field, that to work creatively he must put flesh into it, and enjoy it as a lark, or as a fascinating adventure.
>
> How different from the workers in the heavy industry that professional writing has become!
>
> If you ever touch Florence, come to see me.

Sincerely yours,

B. Berenson

I stared at the letter and almost wept.

Come see me.

I was making $90 a week at the time, writing mostly for the small magazines.

Six months earlier I had attended a first screening of the Cinerama process and sat with tears streaming down my cheeks as images of Italy and France and England poured across the screen.

"When, when, oh when," I said to myself, "will we ever have money to travel?"

Never, was my own silent response. The market for Martians and people who wrote about them was low or nonexistent.

The letter from Berenson terrified me. I put off answering it, afraid to make a fool of myself. Also, there was the question of travel: an impossibility. We would never meet the old man face to face!

Salvation arrived in the guise of film-director John Huston.

On Saint Valentine's night in 1951 I had dined with Huston and given him copies of my first three books, containing more than 60 of my short stories. I told him very simply and directly that if he liked my books as much as I loved his films, one day we must work together. From Africa, a month later, Huston wrote: "You're right. Someday we will work together."

Two years had passed, with only an occasional note from Huston. Now in the late summer of 1953, Huston telephoned, invited me to his hotel, put a drink in my hand and asked: "How would you like to come live in Ireland and write the screenplay of *Moby Dick*?"

Years later, Huston was to imitate my response, for the benefit of his friends. My jaw, it seemed, fell literally to my chest, as my skeleton collapsed. When I had put myself back together, I stammered that, very honestly, I had never read the book!

"Well, kid," said Huston, "get yourself home, read as much as you can tonight, come for lunch tomorrow, tell me if it's right."

I stayed up until three in the morning and found old friends leaping from Melville's text to welcome me—the Bible, and Shakespeare. I prowled the book wildly, plunging in here, wandering there, and at last going back to read that glorious first sentence: Call me Ishmael.

And I was in love.

My family and I shipped for Ireland three weeks later. In the midst of wrestling with "that damned Whale," I wrote to Berenson, who responded on March 14, 1954:

> Thanks for your good letter bringing the glad tidings that you will be coming to Italy in the spring…. If you could let me know a bit ahead just where you expect to be here in Florence, and for how long, it would be best all around….
>
> Thank you for the book *The Martian Chronicles*…. I have read it with curiosity and admiration…. I cannot and do not mean to try to persuade you that your "framework" seems superfluous. Perhaps you can write only with that trellis to climb on. But your sense of people, their reactions as well as spontaneous actions, is so fine, so delicate, that I could wish you were creating novels written of characters, and characters not engaged in fantastic events…. Let me repeat that I look forward zestfully to meeting you.
>
> Cordially.

Good Grief, I thought, do I head south for one more intellectual free-for-all, to be beat up and bested by a bantamweight Boston exile? But, I had to admit, Berenson hadn't wasted any time. In this his second letter, he seemed to me anyway, to be measuring my shadow for a possible fall, even though he sugared his gentle half-criticisms with gracious compliments.

With vague misgivings, we headed south.

In Florence, we telephoned I Tatti, and B.B. sent his car for us. Delivered to the villa, we were greeted by Nicky Mariano, Berenson's personal secretary for some 50 years, an intelligent, warm, and lovely human being. We were escorted to Berenson's library to await his arrival from a morning's work on a new book.

Then, suddenly, he was there in the doorway, looking intently at us, a very small man indeed, very frail looking, but energetic in the moment of his speaking. What he said was:

"My Bradbury, I am going to ask you a question. Depending on how you answer it, we shall be friends or not friends."

I heard my own voice, half trembling, say: "Ask the question."

"Well now," said Berenson, advancing slowly upon me, "you didn't answer my first letter to you for many months. Why? Was it because you had never heard of this man Berenson, and only found out later, and then hurried to write?"

"Mr. Berenson," I cried. "Your letter scared the hell out of me! I wasn't prepared for it. I didn't think I could find the words to respond intelligently, on top of which I had no money, no way to travel, no chance of ever seeing you. It was hopeless. But now, suddenly, here we are! What else can I say?"

"Nothing." Berenson moved forward more swiftly now, smiling. "Accepted. We shall be friends."

I think we laughed then, all of us; the room became warmer, we sat down to a splendid lunch and fine wine.

My apprehensions fled. The bantamweight never attacked, never measured me for an intellectual box, never called me the names the bright Manhattan people had once called me. B.B. was simply curious to find out how a hothouse Martian happened to grow that way. I explained as best I could how I had dieted on *Popular Mechanics*, *Science and Invention*, with equal parts *of Wonder Stories,* when I was eight, nine, and ten.

"Well, now we shall diet you on da Vinci," said B.B., "some of whose sketches could easily inhabit one of your technical fancies. How much do you know of the Renaissance?"

I had learned honestly from my encounter with Huston and the Whale.

Very little, I admitted.

"Splendid!" cried Berenson. "I shall be your guide and teacher!"

As indeed he was. He ran us forth to encounters with churches and galleries and pictures, then called us back for lunch or dinner to watch our faces and listen to our babble. He seemed truly delighted with our naïveté and the prospect of filling up these two young and impossibly empty new friends of his.

I don't believe his delight would have lasted, however, if we hadn't proved out as intuitive students.

Our friendship with B.B. was cemented by sheerest accident.

One morning I hailed a horsecab and gave instructions, in my truly abominable Italian, to take us to the Piazza Michelangelo. We wound up, instead, before the Church of the Carmine. Hell, I thought, since we're here anyway, let's go in.

In an innocence that would shame a gang of saints, my wife and I wandered the church aisles, stared at the murals, gasped, turned, and hurried back to lunch with B.B.

"Well children," he said, pouring the wine, "what have we seen today?"

"Someone new to us. Someone we'd never heard of before," I said.

"And who was this?"

"A painter named Masaccio," I said, mispronouncing the name three different ways.

"Ah." B.B.'s eyes twinkled. "And—mm—what did you think of this—Masaccio?"

"His murals looked—" I searched for the proper words "—as fresh as tomorrow morning. That open, that beautiful. Whatever year he painted in, it must have been a turning point. Was it?"

"Was it, indeed!" Berenson laughed and lifted his glass. "To

Masaccio, and his new discoverers!"

"But now," he said, at lunch. "Let me discover some of you. I've read your *Fahrenheit 451*, which you brought along to give me, and I'm fascinated with your Book People in your finale. The idea of having people become books, memorize them, so as to save them from the Burners—superb. But, I've been thinking—"

I drank my wine a trifle too fast. "Yes?"

"You could do a sequel to your novel, in which the Book People, at a later date and time, when the Burners vanish and the world is safe from fire—when the Book People are called in to recite their memorized books and remember them all wrong."

"My God," I said. "I never thought of that."

"Think of it!" cried Berenson, eyes flashing. *"War and Peace* told by an idiot. *Crime and Punishment* remembered by a fool. Machiavelli's *The Prince* mouthed by a numskull. *Moby Dick* recited by an alcoholic cripple. Oh, the variations are many! You could do a chapter on each book and how it was boned, marrowed, broken, collapsed in ruins and put back together by morons or well-meaning pedants who remember their own interpretation of the soaring lines. *Hamlet* run to earth by a harebrain. *Othello* bleached into boredom by a retired librarian, long gone in senility. What fun, what variations, what satire. Write it down!"

I did. It was a superb idea. But it has lain in my files for some 25 years now. I didn't dare say to Berenson, or perhaps even to myself, then, that it would take a genius who had read, digested, and completely understood the entire body of American and English literature to plow into and create a book like that. Envy the idea? God, yes. But do it? The ghosts of Moliere, Pope, Swift, and Chesterton, plus Shaw, just might bring it off.

Meanwhile, our gentle disagreements continued. I wanted to hold onto my Martians with a tight fist. B.B. oiled his wit with Burgundy and pried my fingers, one by one. "Surely," he pursued, "you have some stories, some novels in progress about, well, just people. I mean, minus machines, minus the ballet scrims and backdrops of your Mars?"

"I've been working on a book called *Dandelion Wine* for ten years," I said. "About my childhood, my folks, my friends in upper Illinois in 1929."

"Finish it!" said Berenson. "Let me see it. Now, later this afternoon—have you been to the Duomo yet? No? Out you go."

And out we went and the days passed and it was time to leave for Venice. Not a sad leaving, we discovered, for B.B. was heading for Venice the same week. Whether he came along to be with us, or whether he had planned the trip for himself months before, we never

knew, and were too timid to ask. The great thing was—B.B. would be there, wandering the canals and streets, to welcome us!

B.B. wasn't there.

Well, he *was* there, said the voice on the hotel phone, but he was gone. Gone where? Out. Out like a small child, unable to wait for one more encounter with Raphael, one more collision with Tintoretto!

No one, not even Nicky, knew where he was. He would come wandering back soon, of course, and then we would lunch.

We went out, hoping to find B.B., but found, instead, to his later delight, the special Veroneses he loved, plus the Bellinis, plus, plus, the list was endless, as was the after-lunch, high-tea, before-dinner, early bedtime talk, for our time was running out. We'd been away from America for eight months. Our families were waiting a long way off; it was time to go home.

Meanwhile I had fallen in love with the theatrics of Tintoretto. I used the term in ignorance and found that it was absolutely center-target, on-the-nose. Berenson showed me some sketches of miniature theaters Tintoretto had built and lit so as to study and duplicate his experiments in chiaroscuro.

Toward the end of our last drink together, B.B. let his eyes flash and his mouth work over a tidbit that he soon let forth: "You mustn't mind me when I sometimes quietly insinuate you might grow better without all that machinery to hold you up."

"Mr. Berenson," I said. "I—"

"No, no, let me finish." He waved his small hand and leaned forward. "For I suddenly remember a device whereby the *Boy David* was created. Ask me now: how was the *Boy David* hammered out of his rock, eh? Where does the mighty Michelangelo begin to cut such an incredible figure out of marble?"

"How?" I asked.

"Well, now—" B.B. leaned to refill my glass and sketch out the grand details. "Michelangelo built himself an inkwell twenty inches high and filled it to the brim with ink. In that inkwell he suspended an eighteen-inch-tall model miniature of the *David.* Each day he drained an eighth of an inch of ink from the well. The sides of the well were marked in measures corresponding to inches on the huge slab of marble from which the *David* would be summoned. Measuring in from the sides of the inkwell to the crown of the miniature of *David's* head, Michelangelo then climbed up on the great stone and struck his first blow! Day-by-day, the ink was lowered, day-by-day the marble *David* emerged from the living rock!"

I was tremendously excited by the concept, having never heard of it. The more I thought on it, the more excited I became.

"I have always loved world's fairs and the arts and sciences

exhibitions there," I said. "Someday, by God, someone will give me a chance to help design an Art Gallery of the Future. At the center of it, I want to act out the very process you've described, using three-dimensional models and film. Let a visitor press a button at the front of the exhibit and watch the ink go down an eighth of an inch in the inkwell, revealing the miniature *David.* Then, to one side show a twenty-foot-tall projected image of the waiting marble. As the ink lowers in the real well, the film moves, the rock shatters under an invisible hammer, and the top of *David's* head thrusts high up out of the stone. In 60 seconds flat, your curious gallery-ite would watch head, torso, arms, legs, cut from the rock, even as he touched the button to drain the ink."

"Bravo!" said B.B. "Write it down. Someday—do it!"

One day, I did. The idea has been fed into the concepts for a technological art museum to be built somewhere in the United States in the next few years.

But meanwhile, the last wineglass was emptied, the last good-byes said. "And you're not to call me Mr. Berenson anymore. It's B.B. And you must write often and come back soon. Good-bye children, good-bye."

The next day, in the hour before leaving Venice on the train, I wandered a last time in the Academy, and, on impulse, hurried to B.B.'s hotel and sent twenty dozen flowers up to his room.

Marguerites, they were, and I would have sent more, but I had bought out the supply.

We sailed for home, thinking we would never see him again, But, as he said later, he had books to read and books to write and pictures to look at and honorary sons like myself to tend to.

We began a tennis-match correspondence, which lasted, with Nicky's help, to within a few weeks before his death.

I cannot convince the reader how important these letters were. Remember, those were still lonely times for me. The Space Age, I repeat, was only a rumor beyond a horizon so far off it was ridiculous to contemplate. Science fiction was hidden away with the dust in the libraries. None of it, absolutely none, was taught in the schools. We writers of speculative nonsense were the lost tribe of literature, wandering the earth, begging for a crumb of attention. I got my precious crumb from B.B. when, in letters like this, waiting for me when I reached home, he spoke the needful words that made me want to go on writing and living for him:

> June 29th, 1954
> Dear Ray:
> Before leaving Venice today I want to tell you how

much, while here, I have been thinking of you, and enjoying reading reviews of your writings, both in England and in France… all so favorable. Dear Boy, you have a wonderful future before you. Get us none of the wax, and let us have the bare bones of your gifts. You have such a clean and deep insight into human nature, and a talent for communicating it to others that your responsibility is great….

Ever yours, B.B.

Did ever such a son have such a father?

What an army we made, he to lead, me to follow, he promising to read any damn thing I dared to write, and me storming my typewriter because of that promise.

More letters followed, and I sent B.B. not only books but individual stories, one of which he responded to as follows:

…Do you own my *Painters of the Renaissance*? If you do, turn to that section about Raphael in which I asked the same questions (as in your story).

…I heartily approve of your keeping away from the critics… even though it may entail privations. I have never known an author who did not lose by it, in creative zest.

…I long to see you and your beloved wife. You cannot come (here) too soon.

Again and again in our writing back and forth, B.B. and I circled 'round the touchstone that was our constant center: the joy of creation, the passion with which I tried to do things born of pure love or pure hate (when something was truly worth hating), and the fact that I threw up, as I put it, every morning, and cleaned up after lunch. The creative explosion first, then the critical clearing of the concussion area. I told B.B. that I had had a sign by my typewriter for years that read: *Don't Think, Do!*

Plenty of time to *think* after your love is accomplished.

B.B. approved.

The praise he ladled on me, with intimations of his own mortality, could not but have caused a crisis in my life:

August 18, 1955

…You have imagination and psychology together, and when combined cannot fail to be suggestive of allegory, of prophecy…. How I wish I could live to see the full ripeness of your gifts.

April 4, 1956

…Dear Ray, if only you were here, what talks we could have. How absurd that you, who produce so much for the public, lack the money to come over. Let me hope that you will succeed in doing so very soon. Remember that I am within weeks of being ninety-one, and I neither expect nor want to live very much longer….

This last did it. Tears sprang to my eyes. I took one look at my wife, as she read the letter. She nodded, reading my thoughts. I picked up the phone and called my film agent. "Get me a job, any job, anywhere in Europe," I said. "We've got to make it to Italy this summer!"

My agent called back an hour later with incredible news: "You're not going to believe this," he said. "How would you like to go straight to Florence, Italy, and settle in to write a film based on the life of Lorenzo de' Medici?"

I was stunned, and gave a great shout. My agent filled in the details. It seemed that Tyrone Power was behind the project. He was working with a number of people whom my agent named. The more he talked, the quieter I became. With all the details given, I knew these were simply the wrong people to go live and work with.

I thanked my agent, said no, and cabled B.B. to hang on, live! until we could make it over. I followed it with a letter. B.B. wrote back in July:

…I am deeply disappointed that you are not coming over soon. Shall I ever see you again? I already am a month in my ninety-second year….

…Very interesting the article on your script of *Moby Dick*…. I believe that any instrument can be used as the painter uses his brush, and the writer words, to produce a work of art… provided the user of the instrument is a heaven-inspired artist and not merely a day laborer…. My complaint against cinema and television is in the first place that I cannot linger contemplating over them—they pass so swiftly, and then that they are so bad for these eyes.

…When I read, I can sip and gestate and stop to dream and wonder. The cinema is "Faster, faster, Circe Goddess. Let the bright procession, the eddying forms, sweep this, my soul!"

…I want tranquility in enjoyment.

…Do not cinema and TV contribute to the hideous pace of today, events crushed by those just behind them?!

In January 1957 a note came from B.B.

> Dear Ray:
> Not even a Christmas card? Why, why, why?

I cabled B.B. telling him that cards had been sent, but that the Italian mail service had a way of dumping mail off Capri if it suited them. A long letter to him followed. Then, a few months later I was able to write and tell him better news. Graham Greene had given a story of mine to Sir Carol Reed, the director of *Odd Man Out* and *The Third Man*. Reed had flown to Los Angeles to meet with me, and we were to return for a summer of screenplay writing in London.

The summer was perfection with Sir Carol. The screenplay finished, we headed south to B.B., who, with his sister and Nicky, was avoiding the hot Italian weather in his retreat at Vallombrosa.

We were reunited in joy, as if three years had not passed since our last fireworks. B.B. was, of course, even more the trembling grey moth now; the bones had thinned within the mother-of-pearl, crushed-flower flesh, but his spirits were good and his mind clean. The old testings, the gentle arguments bombarded me before, during, and after lunch, and took up again after a very long siesta, at late-afternoon tea.

B.B. was harboring his strength even more now. He slept later, napped longer, and saved his energy for the various articles, not just one, that he wrote each afternoon before bedding down long before nine. Awake only a few hours a day, he made those hours burn and count.

I had been a good son, of course, listening and doing over the years. I brought B.B. a copy of the first edition of my *Dandelion Wine*.

"No Martians this time? Good, good. Not that your Martians aren't fine company, good metaphor. But this, now—this—"

He had come by happy accident on a chapter about an old man named Colonel Freeleigh. His eyes lingered and flashed.

"You've caught some of me here, yes?"

"Yes."

It was the story of an old, old man so packed with years and history that he was, to the town children, a Time Machine. But the Time Machine was in disrepair. The colonel, unable to travel, telephoned far places and had friends hang their telephones out windows in Mexico City, so he could hear the bright trolleys pass, or London as Big Ben struck midnight, or Paris to catch the maniac traffic coursing the Place de la Concorde.

"The difference being," observed B.B., "Time Machine that I am, I am still running, traveling, in spite of, did I tell you, falling over a precipice. Well, a small cliff. Well, again, into a small ditch. I was out of the car, bending over to examine some flowers, when the car

backed up and the open door caught and tossed me head-over-heels!"

"It terrified me to hear a cry," said Nicky, "and turn and see B.B. —vanished!"

"What a tumble. Nothing broken. Did we have a good laugh, Nicky?!"

"We did!"

"Now, listen," said B.B. putting aside his teacup with hands that never stopped trembling now. "What else are you up to? Poetry?"

"Very bad stuff," I said.

"Keep at it, it'll go well one day. Plays?"

"Mediocre one-acts."

"That will change! You have a good ear. More films?"

"I've promised myself to do only one every four years."

"Fine. Keep it that way. I'm out of reading matter. Do me another novel!"

"I will," I said. And I did.

Now there was the last hour of our last day with B.B. to finish out as the sun began to set. We played a game we had started years before of: "Who Owns What And Which and Why?" which has since become a small poem that I have just published.

Who owns October, for instance? Edgar Allan Poe and Thomas Wolfe. Among artists? Goya and Gustave Dore.

Name your own writers, artists, reasons, and start the fight.

Who owns Don Quixote? Dore, again. Think of the mad battler of windmills and his illustrations snap instantly in place. For that matter, Dore owns Dante and Milton and the Bible, too. And London, if you recall the scores of etchings he did in those teeming streets.

Who owns the Beauty of Women in the world? B.B. opted for certain Raphaels, to be argumentative. I had just fallen in love with Botticelli's creatures of autumn or the birthing seas. We compromised on da Vinci's cartoon for *The Virgin of the Rocks.*

Who owns winter? Whittier, perhaps. Perhaps Edith Sitwell.

Christmas, Easter, summer, spring, old people, children, fairies, ghosts, kings, the list can be long and various and the nominations incredibly on-the-nose lovely or unacceptably ridiculous or grotesque.

The last of the sun was gone. Wrapped in great blankets against a sudden chill, we said our good-byes. "And remember," said B.B. "when you go to museums, only stay for an hour at a time! Don't exhaust the body so as to exhaust the eye and tire the mind! Good-bye, young lady. Good-bye, dear boy. Remember this tired old man!"

"Oh, B.B.," I said. I embraced him and felt the trembling that was half age and half unspent ideas so much wanting to burst forth. "Oh, B.B., I always will."

His death was still two incredible years away. He had many

journeys to go before his sleep, and he made as many as he could, dropping me cards along the way, glad for a son who was glad to receive them—the best of sons because I didn't try to out-best papa or kill him for mom, or embarrass him before his peers. I professed my love to him and Nicky whenever I could. A last card came from them in October 1959, and a few days later the news broke that Mario Lanza, the singer, had died in Italy and, oh, yes, the same day, the art historian, Bernard Berenson. Long articles followed, of course, in every major newspaper and magazine. B.B. did not go quietly to join his friends in another century.

In the late desert afternoon it came to me to think of him in the words of Gerard Manley Hopkins: "What I do is me, for that I came."

If ever a man entered the world to become himself and know a time and declare its virtues and delineate its boundaries in terms of his own insatiable love and curiosity and light, it was this old man I had described as a Time Machine for us all. The machine had stopped now, but the territory it had mapped was still there, waiting to enhance our lives.

I telegraphed Nicky the same dumb and inadequate words we always telegraph anyone at such a time. I wrote her a week later, recalling the good fact of my last day in Venice when I had bought and brought to his hotel twenty dozen flowers, twenty dozen white marguerites for the living while they lived.

All for B.B. All sent with joy and love from his now and everlasting son.

1979

FEDERICO FELLINI

From sunlit midnights to moonlit noons

Federico Fellini, may his films run forever! Federico Fellini, may the bulb burn out in his projector, may his film run dry.

With a cry of joy you leap off a diving board, proclaiming his genius. Halfway down to what suddenly becomes an empty pool, you imitate those old newsreels, reverse sprockets and let yourself be flashed back up to stand dismayed at your cowardice, half-disillusioned but wanting to jump again.

Such are the feelings when one turns the pages of the giant book, *Fellini's Films*, about a giant autobiographical maker of films. And since Fellini is at odds with himself, you share his dichotomy.

No matter what your delights or dismays with the films themselves, this tribute to the Italian genius contains 400 color and black and white stills from his fifteen and a half films, proving that he has a magician's eye and an imagination born to be locked, if sometimes erratically, into a camera. Complementing the photographs are brief resumes of each motion picture written by Gilbert Salachas and Thomas Bodmer.

In his foreword, Georges Simenon says Fellini is the cinema, "not the commercial or the avant-garde cinema, or that of any particular technique or genre, dramatic, comic or grotesque. He is a director who, using every means at his disposal—sometimes the most unexpected—communicates to us the humanity and the obsessions that seethe within him."

I agree with Simenon, even though it means an all-night brawl next time I visit a cinema-school's after-screening beerbust.

For he is indeed the grandson of Melies, the French-film fantasist, son and heir of Charles Chaplin, friend of Lon Chaney. When Fellini walks at night and calls, the gargoyles on Notre Dame waken to play parts. Quasimodo comes down and in new shapes speaks lines in *La Strada* and *Satyricon*, or lies a nameless monster on the beach in *La Dolce Vita*, surrounded by bored sophisticates who, momentarily touched by repulsion and sadness, wander off to their dooms.

If he had been born in 1900 instead of 1920, Fellini could have conceived and directed such films as Chaney's *Phantom of the Opera,* whose villainous hero Erik is first cousin to the lost Fellini souls who wander out of sunlit midnights into moonlit noons. All three characters in *La Strada*, the parts written for Giulietta Massina, Richard Basehart and Anthony Quinn, are borrowed from

Quasimodo's flesh, reformed, made more palatable, but still destined to run on unseen tracks to destroy or be destroyed. Under the clown's makeup of Gelsomina, or under Erik's *Phantom of the Opera* mask, is the death's head. Chaplinesque lady or monster pursued, we weep for both as they are driven to their graves.

In *Fellini's Films*, the authors put his entire cartoon-oriented, vaudeville-circus-carnival-church-Roman-sweatbath mythology on full display.

His early imagination was concussed and formed in silent theaters by rambunctious Tramps and Cabinets that birthed Caligaris. Fellini as a young man was a writer of photo-comic strips for Italian newspapers. His becoming a director reminds one of a scene in *Modern Times.* In it, the innocent Chaplin, picking up a red flag fallen off the rear of a truck, suddenly discovers that a mob has rounded the corner behind him. He finds himself inadvertently heading a revolutionary parade. So, one morning 27 years ago, Fellini woke to find a director missing and himself asked to fill the empty shoes.

The rest is truly a history of filmmaking sieved through his mind onto the screen, into this book.

There is more of *The Gold Rush* and *The Circus* in his films than the post World War II Italian classics *Open City, Shoeshine,* or *The Bicycle Thief.*

He would have been at home with Fatty Arbuckle, Marie Dressler, Wally Berry, Ben Turpin, Rudolph Valentino, John Barrymore or Mickey Mouse—oversized cardboard-cutout grotesques, all of them, or outright cartoons.

Fellini's bent has always been the outrageous contained, the colossal ego in miniature surroundings, the Milquetoast hero/heroine, walking like Chaplin, cringing like Langdon, occasionally as brave as Harold Lloyd, and the wagon train surrounded in a wilderness of baroque/rococo monsters.

Chaplin, threatened by the immense avalanche of meat that was Mack Swain, was hardly different from Fellini's clown-wife floating down Rome's Via Veneto at midnight amidst cannibal movie-starlet piranhas and superproducer crocodiles with 40-foot-wide smiles.

To repeat: When Charles Chaplin grew old, he changed himself to Federico Fellini. The aging comedian, whose comedies had become more serious and less funny and less successful, found the right receptacle and passed his soul on to the young Italian.

Fellini as disciple, doppelganger Tramp, moves down the same road Chaplin started off on in 1912. That road extends out of silent-film America, across the world and down the boot of Italy. Somewhere along the line The Tramp becomes Fellini's actors on an identical road in *Variety Lights, I Vitelloni, La Strada*, and *Amarcord.* Along the way

The Tramp changes sex, and becomes Fellini's wife.

This book is full of such magical pictures and magical confrontations as a small boy stunned by an encounter with a horned beast on a misty road; Cabiria onstage in a cheap theater where a fourth-rate hypnotist enchants her so she becomes beautiful and recounts a lost childhood; the appearance as if by miracle of a peacock in a town square on a snowy day in winter when the town needs that tail with all its incredible eyes to stare upon its desolation.

This book proves that Fellini is a religion unto himself. He snorts at the church's dubious miracles and goes forth in the world to find the quiet miracles he makes his own, and ours, forever.

His imagination, perfect as well as flawed, is that of a saint, if we remember that the greatest saints were taken with fits, starts and fevers. They enjoyed prophecies, illuminations, insanities and visions on wider screens than we have since invented. Fellini, like them, seems to have wandered in his own wilderness and wakened 40 days later, temperature normal, meanwhile having changed himself and the world.

This collection of photos, then, might well be retitled the *Temptations of St. Federico*, or *Fellini's Gardens of Terror and Delight.* The trouble is, Fellini disbelieves his sainthood but suffers his visions nevertheless. He is the novelist-author-cartoonist suffering like Job, playing carpenter as the Boy Christ.

He is the innocent child on the rim of a wilderness of city, seeing wildflowers between the tractors and the construction beams.

And instantly he is the child become disillusioned man, seeing only struts and girders, lost in that city, seeking his younger self, hoping that the boy, re-found, can show him thistle seeds on the fresh wind. Spring come again to save mankind, himself and sanity.

If Shakespeare invented Freud (and he did, he *did*!) then surely Fellini reinvented his younger self, his dreams, and us and ours along with it.

Here comes the rub. In recent years, not necessarily visible in this book but brutally apparent in the projected films, Fellini has been at war with himself.

He has allowed the disillusioned doubter, the middle-aged cynic (which is only a post-puberty stance prolonged to excess) to win out over the boy. Hence, many of his films have become all gargoyle and no acolyte.

Can Fellini run back on his own time track, regain that lost innocence, to some degree at least, and keep it? Or is he doomed to wander the earth like the Mastroianni character in *8½*, haunted by ghosts and guilts, which will not be exorcised by trapping them on film and rerunning their terrors again and again? Where is Fellini's

catharsis, or do the old rules still apply? Nietzsche said that we have our Arts so we won't die of Truth, but does Fellini listen or, listening, believe?

Even as the older self must contain and illuminate the young without smothering it, so the younger self must blood and energize the intellect of the full-grown man. But if that older mind is tired by cynicism, the blood is poisoned and the child that runs the gamut from heart to head and back again is hamstrung in midstride. Fellini seems almost to have doubted himself out of existence, helped by those false friends we all find surrounding us, using up the air we need to breathe. Whether he knows it or not, Fellini is mobbed-in by such friends who are the dumb enemies of true self. Mass firings are the answer. Failed imaginations and failed wills are not proper company. The sooner Fellini gets back out on that road, long as it is, sad as it is, funny as it is, the sooner his films will breathe again. He will give up waltzing with empty mechanical dolls, as does Casanova in the dire ending of Fellini's film, and dance with himself. There could be no better, truer, livelier companion.

The road is waiting. The boy is there on the edge of the city, the best part of Fellini's self. We can only beg the great Federico to listen and hope that the boy yells loud enough.

While we are waiting and the finale is a long way off, and many films ache to be finished and born, there is this picture book, photographed from the walls and ceilings inside Fellini's magic-lantern head. It is Halloween and darkness. It is the New Year of Christmas. It is a true Easter and its certain death and its promise of rebirth. It is being sure you will die at midnight and wake the next morn to find that you have another chance.

It is *Fellini's Films.* And it is beautiful.

1977

This article, read by Fellini, caused him to invite R.B. to Rome.

THE HIPBONE OF ABRAHAM L.

I don't think anyone else in the country has what I have in my basement office.

The hipbone of Abraham Lincoln.

We'll come back to the hipbone in a moment. First…

On the Bob Hope Radio Show in 1938 I heard Jerry Colonna shout as follows:

"Hello, Hope! We're building a bridge. And starting at the *top.*"

"Impossible, Colonna!"

"Alright, boys, tear it down!"

Which about describes the artists, architects, blueprinters, builders, and the dreamers of Disneyland, Disney World, and EPCOT, all located at WDI, Walt Disney Imagineering, in Glendale, California.

The gentlemen golfers who build bridges, starting at the top.

Long before I met them, I had defended their dream. Having found from meteorologists the location of the best California weather, they built near Anaheim. When Eastern critics laughed at their fantasy land that would soon sink into the earth, I fired back. My first visit to Disneyland had been with Captain Bligh, Charles Laughton, who plowed through the crowds, cresting the waves of people to take over the Jungle Ride boat and deliver me to joy. Anything, I said, that was good enough for Captain Bligh, was good enough for me.

So, the Disney gentlemen saw me coming a long time before I arrived. But, finally, how did I get to meet these master Imagineers, who painted futures in the middle of the air and then ran to build a foundation under them?

I met them through Walt Disney, who came to me gift wrapped one week before Christmas 1964. Crossing a crowded Beverly Hills department store, I saw a man bearing down on me, his chin tucked over an armload of presents.

My God, I thought, it's my hero.

"Mr. Disney?" I asked, and told him my name.

"I know your books," said Walt.

"Thank God," I said.

"Why?" asked Walt.

"Because," I said, "some day I'd like to take you to lunch."

"Tomorrow?" asked Walt.

Not next week or next year. But—dear Lord!—tomorrow!

Before lunch the next day, Walt's secretary warned me: "One hour, from twelve to one. Then—git!"

"Yes, ma'am," I said and went in to sit with Walt for a lunch of soup and sandwiches served on a card table.

"Nothing has to die," said Walt.

He said this not as prophecy but practical fact.

He was, in fact, speaking on some future blueprints for Walt Disney World, the architectural clone, one-size larger, of Disneyland. And far off in the future, EPCOT Center, in Florida.

We were commiserating with each other over the fact that in the history of nations, World's Fairs were built one year, to be torn down the next. Dumb, stupid, ridiculous were some of the terms we tossed back and forth. Why not, we asked in our verbal badminton game, build a fair and let it stand forever? And, on occasion, tear off the wallpaper inside and repair with new fancies, notions, concepts, ideas, dreams?

At one o'clock that afternoon, I leaped to my feet, shook Walt's hand, rushed for the door on cue. "Wait!" Walt said. "I have something to show you."

He hustled me out the door to examine the latest robot hippo, some spare-part mock-ups for the future *Pirates of the Caribbean,* and the plans for a *PeopleMover* that could one day solve big city traffics.

Breathless, we staggered back to Walt's office at three in the afternoon. Walt's secretary glared at me, tapping her watch. I pointed at Walt and cried: *"He* did it!"

And indeed he had. If Walt saw from your face that you truly lit up about one of his wildest notions, you were lost and gone on the grand tour, always winding up at Disney Imagineering.

Disney Imagineering's artists thrive and pomegranate-seed explode inside a nondescript Glendale building that looks as if it might house a thousand endless noon board meetings. There is no sign out front to indicate that at Christmas and Easter, here hides a madhouse of costumes and ambulatory self-wrapped gifts.

No hint that, at Halloween, Imagineering becomes a ghost manufactory, a giant Ouija board that summons up ghouls, skeletons, a mirror with a grotesque mask frozen in it that runs about telling folks they "are not the fairest of them all," while Maleficent the Dragon inflates herself to tower above the outside parking lot.

Who are the maniacs in charge of this madhouse? John Hench, sent by Disney to study at the Sorbonne in 1939, and the nearest thing to Walt himself. Beyond eighty, John, as he chats with the inhabitants of this millrace, scribble-sketches blueprints and critters with a fine-artist's hand.

Marty Sklar, the quietest of maniacs, keeps Imagineering off the rails but on the tracks. Hired at age twenty-one, while editor of the UCLA *Daily Bruin*, Marty remembers that Disney gave him—a raw, untrained reporter—a chance to edit a Disneyland newspaper the month before Disneyland opened, 33 years ago. On Walt's behalf, he

gives other young people a chance to jump off cliffs and build their wings on the way down, at Imagineering.

Between these two, Disney Imagineering has hired some fairly improbable, as I mentioned before, gentlemen golfers, to tee off mind-grenades instead of golf balls.

Item: Tony Baxter, whose career was popping popcorn at Disneyland in his spare time, built a working model of a gravity-fall train. This 3-D calling card gained him the Imagineering job of creating the *Big Thunder Mountain Railroad* that roars down mountain tracks at Disney's theme parks. Its twin will soon be built at Euro-Disney, and the chief designer for this new Magic Kingdom will be… Tony Baxter.

Item: Harper Goff, lover and collector of miniature model railroads. Walt Disney and Goff met in a London railroad-model toy store and saw the glazed stare of an amateur locomotive fiend in each other's faces. Goff wound up helping art sketch-design the Adventureland Jungle Cruise and making sure Disneyland's locomotives ran on time.

Future item: Tom Scherman. The young man who was so enamored of Jules Verne that he secretly converted his Hollywood apartment into a clone of Captain Nemo's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* submarine with portholes, periscope, and seashell telephones. His landlady, unaware of the transformation, blundered into the apartment one day and, stunned, threw Scherman out and dismantled the submarine. Scherman wound up with Disney Imagineering, building Nautilus submersibles and dreaming up The Jules Verne Discovery World.

And so it went and so it goes.

Sklar and Hench, then, are curators of a vast and vital storage hall of history, a living museum, a World's Fair unto itself.

In sum, the Renaissance did not die, it just hid out at Imagineering Inc. You need but ask for Sleeping Beauty's castle, the turrets of Pierrefonds, Mad Ludwig's towers, or touches of Vaux Le Vecomte. So summoned, they will sprout in a Glendale back lot to be truck-transited down freeways to Anaheim, Orlando or across the ocean airs to Japan.

Let me recount a telephone episode of a few years back.

An editor for the French magazine *Nouvel Observateur* called from Paris. "Monsieur Bradbury," she said, "it has been announced, Disneyland comes to France. How do you feel about this? All those toys and games!"

"My dear young woman," I said. "You don't understand. It is not toys and games. It is France's gift of itself to itself!"

"*What, what?"* the lady cried.

“Good grief,” I said, “don’t you know how much Walt loved France and Paris and your gardens and flowers, and your twenty thousand restaurants and art museums and Carcassonne and Chantilly and Chambord and how he came to visit you year after year and looked around at the United States and said, ‘I will bring all this to my country, one way or another?’ And the gardens were planted and thousands of tables, chairs, and umbrellas were placed where visitors might sit and people-watch, and the castles arose and one was Disneyland and the other Walt Disney World.

“A final touch, my dear young lady. In the past few years, visiting France, I have fallen in love with the work of the French architect Viollet-le-Duc, who rebuilt Pierrefonds, Carcassonne, part of Notre Dame de Paris, and who designed and placed the stone gargoyles up there in the wind and rain. Returning to Disneyland last year, I saw a spire on the side of Sleeping Beauty’s castle, a duplicate of the convoluted and beauteous spire Viollet-le-Duc raised atop Notre Dame one hundred years ago. I called John Hench out at Imagineering, ‘John,’ I said, ‘how long has Viollet-le-Duc’s spire been on the side of Sleeping Beauty’s castle?’ ‘Thirty years,’ said Hench. ‘My God,’ I said, ‘I never noticed before! Who put it there?’ ‘Walt,’ said Hench. ‘Why?’ I asked. ‘Because he loved it,’ said Hench.

“Because he loved it.” Something not needed but needed, not necessary but necessary. Costing approximately $100,000. But added to the castle at that time because Walt wished it to be there. Because of Walt, Viollet-le-Duc lives in America.

“Oh, Monsieur Bradbury,” cried the lady editor in Paris. “You make me feel so good!”

“Because,” I replied, “it’s *true*.”

What else is true? Besides Euro-Disney, what other wonders have Sklar and Hench summoned up by striking the earth with Walt’s old sketchbook?

Norway, with its fjords and dragon-headed ships as part of the EPCOT Showcase territory.

A pulsing heartbeat excursion through the human body in the *Wonders of Life* adventure at EPCOT Center.

And the lazarus-like resurrection, out of the California tombs, of Hollywood itself!

Millions of Japanese camera-hung tourists fastbrake their limousines at Hollywood and Vine each year. Leaping out merrily, they are shocked to be greeted by slimy winos, dilapidated hookers, arthritic dogs, burned-out hot dog stands and homeless vagrants whose arms look fresh from a porcupine fusillade.

All this being true, do you rebuild Hollywood? Yes!

But, two-thousand miles away! at the Disney-MGM Studios at

Walt Disney World.

Here stands Grauman's Chinese, when it first rose to confound the apple-yard architects and cowboy real estate agents of the 1920s. Here lives Hollywood and Vine as it never was but should have been, with real movie stars on each corner. The last time anything like that happened was when Cecil B. DeMille drove his chariots through the intersection, on his way to Galilee. Once, as a child on roller skates, I thought I saw Clark Gable there, flagging a taxi. But it was another country, another time. Disney will rebirth the whole thing. Harlow, Gable and Colbert would feel right at home parading down this boulevard.

Ironic then, that while the old Hollywood staggers toward a renovation that will maunder on until 2005, Disney's Tinsel Town, for the same cost, will long since be up and operating.

Like Hollywood, like America, like the world.

For the simple fact, proven over and over in the history of towns and cities, is that city fathers and chambers of commerce know not habitations, nor much of anything else. The cities have gone to ruin and the people a ruination within. With no imaginative cures, the mayors and councils have floundered and sunk in tar and taxes. The Disney duchies are the answer.

The Disney duchies? Men who answer to the motto: *In excellentia lucrum.* In excellence is profit. Imagineers who show up, ask for carte blanche, no interference from dreamless officials high or low, and proceed to blueprint a city and build a dream.

Just a few years back, Houston Intercontinental Airport asked Imagineering to create a *PeopleMover* to sort out and distribute the airport's mobs.

Imagineering has just completed a master plan for recreating the remnants of the 1962 Seattle World's Fair, delivering forth a fresh new Seattle Center.

With this as a beginning, by century's end, most if not all of our American towns will have been touched and changed all for the good, by Walt's Paris-inspired, France-rejuvenated ghost.

After Walt died, a rumor had it that he had become a giant popsicle at some cryonics morgue in East Azusa. Not so! How ridiculous! Walt didn't have to immortalize himself.

As he himself said: "Nothing has to die."

So—turn backward, turn backward, O Time in thy flight. Let old cities and new arise.

And Walt? Hell, he's not dead. Just hiding out, like the hipbone of old Abraham L. and the Renaissance, at Disney Imagineering.

Or, as he said to me one day when I asked him to run for mayor of Los Angeles:

“Oh, Ray, why should I be mayor, when I’m already king?”

As for the Hipbone of Abraham L.? When the Disney technicians finished a new model of Lincoln and were ready to discard the old robot, someone, looking at the mechanical hipbone, said, “What’ll we do with this?”

“Why,” said someone else, “send it to Ray Bradbury.”

They did.

It’s here, on my desk, as I write.

1988

MOVIOLA MICKEY or HOW TO JUMP-START A MOUSE AND ANIMATE AN ANIMATION MUSEUM

"Who are we? What are we? Where have we been? Where are we going?"

It was Disney Imagineering calling in 1988.

"What do you mean?" I asked. "Don't you know who you are and what you've done?"

"Yes," they said, "but you know better, you're outside the skin, we can't see ourselves for the seeds. Come over."

So I worked, or rather played, for a week with Roy Disney, John Hench, Van Romans, and some other artists who sat in to illustrate our chat as it came out of our mouths. The great thing about Disney is that you say, or type something in the morning, and by late afternoon, you have ten or twenty pen and ink or watercolor sketches to put flesh on your conversational-IBM-Selectric III-typewriter bones.

It turned out that the Disney folks wanted to blueprint a Museum of Animation.

Easy as cartoon pie, I said, remembering that I had got my Mickey Mouse Club pin at the Genesee Theater in Waukegan, Illinois when I was ten, and had seen all three hundred of the Mouse and Silly Symphony Cartoons from 1927 on.

Well, not quite cartoon-pie simple. Roy Disney and John Hench handed over some plans and photos of an Animation Exhibit already in cardboard cut-out, mock-up shape. Which is to say fascinating but not fascinating enough.

Then they all looked at me for answers. What could I add, subtract, or subdivide on the right side of my head? The whole plan was terribly still, awfully quiet, like many other museum exhibits over the centuries. Did I have an electric charge on me somewhere so I could jolt the entirety to life?

I searched my pockets for several days of meetings, riffled through all my Mouse and Dinosaur Fantasia books, and rummaged among some sketches I had birthed at age fourteen. In bed with a cold, I had crayoned forth some bad reproductions of Mickey, Donald Duck and Horace Horsecollar. Carrying these with me, I went back to the studio for what might have been a final round of what looked to be a frustrating talk.

Then, someone threw a plastic photo of Goofy on the table. In it were imbedded seven or eight images of the confused and hyperactive

Dog. As you moved the photo or your head, Goofy circled about in various antic poses, continuously in action. I had never seen a so-called three-dimensional photo with so many positions and actions trapped and ready to move. I held onto Goofy for a full two or three minutes, making him run, pause, or leap backward. A sheer delight. Out of this delight I at last said:

"Can we get six- or eight-foot-tall photos like this reproduced by any company anywhere in the United States?"

No one was quite sure, they would look into it. "But why?"

"Because," I said, "if we can get life-size, three-dimensional images of Mickey and Donald and Pinocchio and Maleficent, and place them on both sides of the Museum Corridor, then when you walk through the halls, the whole museum will walk with you! It will be an animated museum that animates, the first in history. My God, a museum that not only celebrates animated motion, but moves in an earthquake of action, propelled forward, accompanying you as you walk, pause, go ahead again or step back."

"Good Gravy," or something like that, everyone said.

Phone calls were made. A company was found that could make the plastic sheets with photography imbedded in long vertical strips like Venetian blinds set sidewise.

The name of the process, the same one that binds those tiny dinosaurs into your measuring ruler so they raise or lower their heads, was lenticular photography. It has been around for years, imbedded in measuring sticks, calendars, and postcards. Now I wanted to grow it to giant size to set free Monstro the Whale, Flowers and Trees, Bambi and the Wicked Witch in the Museum of Disney Animation. My God, I thought, if only we can do it. No, I thought, my God, we must!

So my plan, scribbled out swiftly on a note pad, and brought to perfection by artists sitting with us, was this:

Up front in the *Moviola Mickey* traveling museum must be a series of Moviolas, those editing machines into which you peer as into kaleidoscopes or wishing wells, to watch the editable flickers, the images of films that you can cut and slice to fit your fancy, run a riot or end a plague. From one of the large-size Moviolas a huge boa constrictor of film would leap. Arcing across the lobby area the film frames would grow larger and larger until they reached a wall and became a door. Future audiences would step through the slotted film-frame and advance through a long, serpentine-like corridor, a history of animation. Gertie the Dinosaur would perambulate with them as they strolled, and then Mickey and Minnie and all the other barnyard friends would follow, imbedded in lenticular Venetian blind slats upended on the vertical. As the audience advanced, they would encounter videocasette frames in the walls in which, for a half minute

or minute, scenes from *Steamboat Willie* or *The Skeleton Dance* would be repeated endlessly. Moving on, the shapes and the colors in the lenticular walls would change.

With *Flowers and Trees*, the lenticular images would assume all the rainbow colors. And the old barnyard cartoons would find an additional friend, Donald Duck, to walk with lenticular hops and jumps into the years ahead. Images of the Band Concert would whirlwind in the three-dimensional walls, leading us to *The Old Mill,* where again convenient videocassette screens would illustrate Disney's progress leading up to *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Fantasia, Pinocchio* and beyond. Needless to say, the Dwarfs would march to and from work in the walls, pursued by the Whale, the Dinosaurs, and Maleficent and her monsters.

In a great theater at the end of the exhibit, a longer demonstration on the wide screen would give *Fantasia* a chance to expand and drown us in color and sound.

At the finale of our trek, accompanied by bright mobs of familiar friends and enemies, photo-imbedded in every inch of corridor paneling, in one long strip of film, it would seem, by the notched projector holes in ceiling and sill, we would step out of the serpentine and see the film we had inhabited snake up on the air and spiral down to vanish into a final Moviola waiting to devour it.

There you have it. A museum that is one long three-dimensional march through animation history. A museum of animation that animates. A corridor where antic shadows wait to escort you through time. An exhibit, what's more, that can be taken apart, like Lego architecture and moved from Denver to Seattle to Chicago to the Museum of Modern Art to the Smithsonian and back, and perhaps, to some half-permanent, shadow-show perch at EPCOT or Disney World.

That's how I cranked the big Moviola.

Now it's up to the Disney Mousekeepers to run the flickers and start the show.

1991

BEYOND 1984: THE PEOPLE MACHINES

Optimism is an excuse to behave optimally.

People ask me to predict the Future, when all I want to do is prevent it. Better yet, build it. Predicting is much too easy, anyway. You look at the people around you, the street you stand on, the visible air you breathe, and predict more of the same. To hell with more. I want better. My plan is to sneak us by 1984 when it isn't looking and make it to the high ground of 2001, which will be a good year, a vintage year. Who says? I do. Guaranteed? If you follow my nose.

First off, between now and 1999 we must engage in the greatest Airlift in History.

To save Berlin? No. Beach more boat people? Hardly. To salvage refugees adrift in a wrecked city called Detroit, New York, or Chicago? Yes.

For if we can take in one million Cubans, and welcome four hundred thousand strangers each year from far places, we can surely pull three or four million Americans out of their Primeval Digs and Black Holes.

Up and away from the Chicago Abyss. Down and onto the Kansas Plain. OZ has *got* to be out there somewhere, doesn't it? For God's sake, let's find, no, let's *build* it! For it's no use airlifting beast-people out of their sties if we have nowhere to go, nowhere to put them down.

Once upon a time, of course, there were places. They were called small towns. But for various reasons—jobs, money, wanderlust, sex, technological change, mass media—the siren metropolis called, and the Jerkwater Stops fell flat in the dust. What was left of the small town was smothered and crushed when a Juggernaut Shopping Mall wheeled mindlessly through and squatted in a meadow a mile out from Main Street to sell its medicines and grab yokels.

The pattern is familiar now. We have seen it repeated and repeated by mall builders, who think too much and city fathers who think too little.

The situation calls to mind that Mexican farmer who, 36 years ago, while plowing his field, stumbled over a small fire-and-smoke pothole in the midst of his maize. By late afternoon, there was a small creek of lava in his front yard. At noon the next day, the hut was long lost in a burning river. When it was all over, a mountain of lava had

surrounded and taken the nearest village and put the town church hip-deep in cooling rock. So, the Paricutin volcano was born.

For that surprised Mexican farmer, substitute your typical small town mayor and chamber of commerce. For Paricutin, substitute any one of several thousand shopping malls or centers that have erupted across America in the past ten years, and you have an inundation in reverse. The townsfolk rushed out to view the shopping explosions. Downtown Pigs Poke, Idaho, soon resembled Saturday night at the old burying ground. When the folks wandered back in from the shopping mall cow pasture, they took one look at Main Street and never set foot in it again or went away to Minneapolis forever.

How do you make the small town work again? How do you prepare it for my airlift of forlorn and despairing city folk clamoring to be born-again hayseeds?

Putting wheels on the meadow mall and rolling it back into Dead Falls won't do it. But it would be a start.

All right then, what *do* we build?

A People Machine.

Walt Disney didn't exactly patent the idea, but by God he surely reinvented it. Disneyland and Disney World contain many of the Machine units that we could nail together and set down in a thousand lost towns between now and 1990.

What are we talking about? Not just a shopping center where people come to buy one sheet, one shirt, or one shoe, but a place where lingering, staying, dawdling, socializing are a way of life. A refuge from the big city, or, sometimes worse, your own parlor. A place so incredibly right that mobs will rush to it crying "Sanctuary!" and be allowed in forever. A place, in sum, where people can come to be people. The idea is as old as Athens at high noon, Rome soon after supper, Paris at dawn, Alexandria at dusk.

Let's face it, there is no use building a center or a mall where people only come on occasion to argue fresh fruit and give up coffee. A town is conversation, gossiping, chatting, watching, looking, noting, and staring. We must give people back their eyes. And their mouths. And their derrieres.

What to do with your eyes is what our People Machine will teach.

What to do with your mouth is what our townsfolk will learn.

What to do with your rump roast posterior is Ballet Position Number One in the plaza of the future.

We must build a social machine of such curious and mixed and delightful parts that the city beyond the horizon will fall over dead with envy and sink into the tar where its dinosaur unsociability belongs.

"Okay, Prophet, put the pieces together," you cry. "What do we

build and fit?"

For starters, a fresh new idea, thought of just seventeen million mornings ago: The Town Plaza.

If you have one lying about, summon it back to life.

"How?" Here's the blueprint:

The Longest Bar in the World is in Tijuana. Why not, facing our plaza, build the Longest Soda Fountain in the World! With one hundred stools facing an old-fashioned soda fountain. Beyond the stools, put another 50 to 80 tables, and beyond the tables another 40 or 50 booths.

On the opposite side of the plaza, let us add a wonderfully colored, imaginatively built bookstore, whose paperback department, in particular, would carry a cross section of just about every and any kind of book that people out in the Plaza might want to hold in their hands or sit on. The bookstore would open late in the afternoon and stay open until at least midnight every night.

The bookstore, needless to say, should be fabulous, metaphorical, mythological, and as exciting as the books that line the shelves. Libraries may well demand silence, but, why not as you enter our bookstore, have a Robot Computer King or a Queen-of-Egypt mummy standing near the door, to whom you can whisper your needs, and who will tell you all the latest wonders in the grand stacks and corridors! The mummy's breastplate might have, in gold beetle symbols, the names of the various sections, which, if pressed, would whisper the new stuff just arrived from across the world! A golden amber beetle, plucked up on its wire, would tickle the quiet message in your peach-fuzz ear.

Wandering the stacks, you could stick your hands in various myth-holes to view tiny dioramas of the areas you are traveling through by book. Stick your head in here: OZ, with music. Stick your head in there: Caveman Territory. Next hole: Dinosaurs. Next after that: Alpha Centauri! Andromeda! With sound! With symphonies!

How do you get to the Children's Section?

By sliding down a Rabbit Hole into the basement!

Who could resist that? Not me!

Where are all the Star Books, the Future Books? Where is the Grand Universe itself? Up a twisting circular staircase into a miniature, domed planetarium where John Carter, Luke Skywalker, and Chewbacca wait!

Over in the adult mystery section, as you prowl the stacks, why not, on occasion, the sound of a faintly squeaking door, a dim rattle of gunfire among the dark, leaning books if you pick up some stethoscopes hanging there and give a listen. Now—back out to the Town Plaza!

On the third side of the plaza build a fairly large bike rink, with humps and hills and semi-detours, fast and slow lanes, where you can rent a bike and take off for a few miles of nice work with a view of the plaza, the ice-cream eaters, and the book people. Under a canopy, of course, for fair and foul weather.

On two opposing corners of the plaza, the finest restaurants you can put together under sane or insane but imaginative chefs. On two other opposing corners, cinemas running the latest appalling imports from the prison side of Hollywood, or the great stuff from Alpha Centauri and Beyond.

If your plaza is near a college or university, great. Lacking that, toss in a university extension building as close to the Ice Cream Parlor as possible. We want all those nice young bodies, every three years a new mob, parading around being lovable idiots.

Now, next door to the bookstore, what?

That old-fashioned Kaleidoscope, the vast store you could hold up to the sun and see just about anything you wanted to see and touch and buy—The Dime Store!

And I mean a bright, well-lit, clean, uncrowded, though full of incredible junk, Dime Store, the way they used to be before you took one look and never went in again—the year they began to look like garbage dumps.

Next to that, a Drug Store, and I mean a Drug Store, the way they used to look and smell. Remember the smell? All the mysterious medicines and cosmetics and perfumes. Somebody should bottle that. The smell alone makes the feet drift, the body turn and move in its direction.

Next to that—a Penny Arcade, but not just your old-fashioned Penny Arcade with robot-tarot-witches, penny-moviola machines, and Electrocute-Yourself-For-A-Penny devices. I mean an Arcade where Darth Vader will cream your tiny guts with his laser. Where Outer Space beckons in three dimensions, where you can blast off in an electro-sensor Pod, to knock hell out of the Empire's rockets, zap the Orion Nebula, disintegrate the Moon, and rebirth ten billion Suns, all in an afternoon. Talk about your Old-fashioned Shooting Gallery taking on new intergalactic aspects! And, with bigger, better, more incredible Computer Games coming up, in monster as well as mini-sizes, you can add to your Penny Arcade, your Outer Space Arcade, as the money pours in.

The Laser Light Arcade, incidentally, might be the first stopping place for any People Mover or electric bus that enters the downtown area of your Future Small Town. Mothers who want to gab and shop can drop Annihilating Junior or Bust-'em-Up Betsy at the Arcade for a few hours of socking Martians or traveling to far countries.

Part of the Electro-Computer Environment would be, of course, my Asking Room. You walk in and ask the room to take you anywhere and it does. “Africa! You Shout.” And Africa’s all around you, on four walls—or one great shell wall that encloses you, if you’re seated. The varieties of adventures a child—or an adult—could ask for might be endless. Each adventure lasting from ten to twenty minutes.

If the town ever got around to building an overhead people mover, or miniature monorail, the pods from this practical ride could, if one wished, detach themselves and *Detour to Paris* or *Turn Here For Bombay*. By pressing a switch while enroute across Peoria, the tired housewife could derail on a sidetrack that slid into an experience tunnel near the Arcade, there to see the Eiffel Tower, the Taj Mahal or the Houses of Parliament before returning to the wonders of Kraft dinners and Coors beer.

All the above, of course, is expensive. Spend your money first on the Town Plaza and its environs, plus the Arcade. The People Mover Pod Experience can come as a dividend, later.

Where were we? Oh, yes…

Back to the four corners again. On the second and third floors of the four buildings on the four corners are the Gray Battalion Headquarters, the Old Folks homes, with the best damn views in town of the bike-riding, ice cream-eating, park-strolling, people-watching, book-reading public. Out of the two-fisted TV grip at last and back out on the street where the greatest danger is an elbow, and soap opera, the real stuff, boils in every passing bod.

Was it Aristotle who woke one morn in his sixties and discovered that for the first time in Lord knows how many years, he had no a.m. erection, and raced down the streets, shouting to the skies, “Free! Free at last! Free!”

Our People Machine, with all its components, promises just that. No more crowding in the TV room with all those strange people and their maniac grins and lousy lines and ill-mannered laughter. No more being forced to stay in school (Channel 2, that is, or Channel 4) when the great world of the town invites and truly beckons.

Free! Free at last! Free!

What *have* we been building here? Not just simple hungers and needs. Not just shopping for things. But shopping for sociability, shopping for people.

Consider this: people on a jet have only been on a trip. People on a train have been on a journey.

Jets bore.

Trains enchant.

Because of—texture.

Jets diminish and vanish people.

Trains summon them back in harvests on both sides of the track.

As with jets and trains, so it is with cities and towns.

If you send people only on trips around your town, don't be surprised if they go off on journeys or hoped-for journeys to other cities as they used to be.

It follows that the more texture, the more surprise you can build into a small town, the better chance you have of keeping them down on the farm after they've seen Paree.

We've pretty well built our plaza now. How about the Main Street leading to the plaza? Starting one or two blocks away, of course, is where you leave your damn car and hoof it, happily I might add, with or without family, toward the Hearthing Place, the Town Family Park we have been describing. Along the way, the more fast-food places you can add to it the better, so that people can carry their own hot dog or pizza onto a park bench. One of the shops, right at the plaza, might be a picnic-basket lunch emporium where for ten bucks or so you can get a wicker of chicken, corn, french fries, and for a few more bucks a bottle of wine, which you tote over to picnic tables in the plaza which, on its dullest night, is ten steps up from "Starsky and Hutch." And where, for a dollar, you can step up and sledgehammer a TV set to death in the Play Pit.

What else do we need for people input? The best damn LP record shop in the world, open until two a.m. Popcorn machines everywhere. Candy-making devices in sweet shop windows. Plus the best magazine and newspaper racks this side of Peoria. Stationery shops with so many lovely papers in the window you can't resist buying what you don't need.

On the way into all this, some *Burma Shave* signposts, please:

1984 Will Not Arrive!

But 2001? Man Alive!

Do you see where I travel? Do you know where I want us all to arrive? There isn't one new idea in all the above. Everything is ancient. But, idiots that we are, we have lost our plazas, destroyed our drug stores, dismantled our fountains, grassed over our sidewalks, and driven our ownselves back into our houses to serve prison sentences meted out by "Baretta," "Quincy," or the "Dallas" idiots.

At Disney World, thousands of people just sit and watch, every night. Trouble is, you have to pay to get in, and at midnight or so they shut it up and kick you out.

Look at your average architectural rendering or building layout viewed in magazines during the past 40 years. Where in hell are the people? Those little ants running around on the super-clean sidewalks —are *those* people? What are they doing? Nothing. Just standing there.

What we do here is put people back into proper scale. Our renderings will show people *doing* things. Like talking, eating, walking, sitting, playing music, playing games, riding, picking each other up, taking each other home. Their acts, their needs will be visible supports on which to lean a town or draw a facade. They won't exist for the town, the town will exist for them, which is only proper and right.

It follows that any architect/city planner, future builder, mayor-dreamer, chamber of commerce patriot who welds this People Machine together, will have *what* happen to him?

One late day in 1988 or so, this builder-planner-dreamer will be seen racing down Main Street pursued by ten thousand wild citizens. Freed from their TV bastille, these maniacs of joy, will catch the builder-dreamer of the People Machine, and will run him for president or (why not?) emperor of the universe!

And when the town center is rebuilt let the refugee airlift begin. From the Piranesi Prison cities mired in 1984, let those who will move back and ahead at the same time. Toward a 1999 that buds and a 2000 that blossoms. Bringing with them, of course, your small or large corporation for employment and sustenance.

A large order. But then the death of towns, the stagnation of cities, and the dooming of millions is no small matter.

But what about those left behind in the big tubercular cities?

The People Machine will fit there, too. Portions of every metropolis are towns to themselves. There's nothing wrong with Greenwich Village that adding in some of the elements mentioned here wouldn't cure. In other parts of New York City, clean out a whole city block and load in all of my components. Plaza, bookshop, ice cream parlor, penny arcade, and all.

So, by this century's end, we can not only revive the small town, but cure the big one, with the same tonics.

And, while we're at it, try to give back to the cities some of the other elements they have lost, without realizing it, over the years.

We want to stay young forever, isn't that true?

We want every day to be that day when we were young and we leaped from bed and asked the world what it had to say or show or be that was brand-spanking fresh-born.

We go to world's fairs for that.

We travel to faraway places for that.

But if all you find when you turn a corner is one more flat surface of marble, one more bank, one more glassless frontage, one more uninhabited edifice, one more unlit shop, the desire to wander, to wonder, extinguishes itself. Torchless candles, we turn and go to other places, other cities that promise delightful twists and turns amongst

shops that stay open late or at least stay lit late, so we can eye-browse the trinket windows.

Think how nice it might be if the largest building in any small American town could have one flat surface, windowless, on which one night the Eiffel Tower would, projected, build itself during the evening, with immense flood-tossed images of the Tower one-fourth erected, one-half, three-fourths, and then, at last, erupted tall against the Parisian sky.

At midnight, tear it down.

That is, pull the image from your great laser-beam projector.

Next night, build the Empire State Building there.

Or toss up column upon Bernini column, the facade of the holy Vatican and St. Peter's.

Or sandwich the White House on top of Monticello on top of Mount Vernon with a lower layer of New Orleans.

This way. Delight.

Wouldn't you, on occasion, want to go downtown some nights, to see just what in hell had been built or torn down? One more reason to visit the old boring Main Street, on its way back through technological rejuvenation.

All of this applies to both small towns and small parts of large cities. We need at least one building in every town, or in some part of a city, that gives us a sense of identity.

Think how it would be if there were one tower in each town that told us not only what we are—the town—but what we can be—the Universe.

If one of these towers were built in a town, as a prototype, others might follow.

Describe the tower?

Here it is.

It would be a tower with a circular escalator moving very slowly up through time, through images, through sounds, through projections, through three-dimensional objects, bas-reliefs.

And most of its images would be of flight: pterodactyls kiting primeval horizons, birds in migration, or sun symbols forever rising in ancient skies to bring with them the sun kings of *time.* During the ascension, Marco Polo's imported Chinese fireworks would light the way, lifting architectural beauties up into the explosive light. Migrations of men would follow, climbing the spiral, multicolored with multitudinous dreams. The dreams being newborn kites and balloons, and gliders and skyscrapers imitating flight in stone. And toward the end of our tower museum ascension, the Wright brothers' winged bike sifting up from the Kitty Hawk dunes, and all the jets and dirigibles to follow. All of it spiraled to music and the vast firebreath

of the Apollo rockets lifting us toward the sun from which we all came. At the top of our climb, the planets, the far suns and our possible future. At the end of our hundred-foot climb, we would step forth in a miniature planetarium to scan a universe that can be ours if we reach out a hand willed by a reaching mind. From there, we would watch future rockets moving off on the last migration toward an inevitable existence through all the eons to come.

Let us call it the Hearthing Place. It could be built as an adjunct to the old city hall or as a tower next to a church. Or, excuse our fiery dust, an insurance tower, why not, that insured the future? What better insurance is there than the rocket? What insuring? The health of man. His will. Founded on what? The imagination of man. His dreams. With what in escrow, with what as down payment? The whole history of his planning and thinking and dreaming and making with his hands and night visions and noon accomplishments.

Think how it might be for coming generations to go to bed and, falling into slumber, hear the great tower proclaim futures, even as the old bell tower in the Civil War town hall proclaimed the present with a feel of the Gothic and somehow graveyard past. The tolling of the funeral bell of lost or won wars then. The sound of the rockets moving up in our tower now and forever. A counting up instead of a counting down. A soft voice, not a loud one, whispering the hour that promises tomorrow and survival. And at midnight, if you're awake, looking out, the dome of the tower, in sudden full firefalls of arrival, as Man reaches and enters the threshold of the universe. All the stars in fireworks there, pulsing, for a brief interval as night turns on its mighty cosmic heel and motions toward a promise of dawn.

What a tower. What a promise. What an insured future.

Architecture that imagines more than itself—that imagines man in order to have even *more* imagined.

The stuff of tomorrows has always been boys, girls, men, women, projecting images of their days on the ceilings of their bedrooms in the hour before sleep.

Those images we must pluck down and erector-set in our cities. Let the tower be the rocket. Let the rocket show us not north, nor east, nor west, nor south by southwest but—*up.* Let all the old gods from Olympus visit there to be visited. If you want to ride up and speak with them, late at night, let them be there, in soft converse, for children to question, and in an alcove half up through *Time,* on the way to Cosmos, let it be possible to step off the escalator and stand watching and hearing Apollo and Aphrodite and Hermes and all the rest telling our visions and pointing in yet further directions.

Architectures that imagine, architectures that promise, architectures that more than stand, architectures that dream.

Architectures that tell us what we can be, what our destiny is. The old structures only promised impossible heavens in death. Let the new ones promise possible life for all the generations to come, when we have knocked death ten times over and turned time inside out, and made it beyond the Moon, beyond Mars, to hearthing places and seedbeds we cannot now imagine, far out beyond the reach of that Gothic death that sounds with every marrow-chilling tone of that old city tower.

Buildings with fire in them, with energy, with blood, and all those dear night-thrown visions on dusky ceilings and two-in-the-morning (oh God, I hope I *can*—!) walls.

Building surprise back into a large city is a matter of erasing blank facades, inserting the small shop back where it once was, on streets that do not refuse us or turn us off, but promise us renewal. Small towns, because of their size, are harder problems. Surprise must come from what little we can do with a minimal amount of architecture and a maximum number of people flowing in surprises around and amongst each other. Big cities depend on mixtures of buildings and humans, small towns must survive mainly with person colliding with person in the most amiable of collisions.

So there you have it. The beginning, most certainly not the middle or the end, of my thinking beyond 1984. That 1984 I hate because it is an intellectual fraud and never had a chance of arriving in a jump-shout-yell culture of ideas such as our own. And on toward the 2001 I truly and completely and resolutely believe in, because it is the chance for us to remake ourselves that is irresistible.

We will *do* everything, we will *solve* everything, we will *build* everything that needs doing, solving, and building during the next few years.

How come? Why the positive bias? Why the inclination toward optimism? Because optimism has only meant one thing to me—the chance to behave optimally. Hip-deep, that is, in our genetics, we behave up to the limit of our blood and brains.

We have done it before. We have done it often.

This is a new war. The best. The war to save our skins, our social selves, the fun of living, to build instead of destroy, to survive rather than be bored to death. To be once more the children of a wide-ranging, imaginative and vital culture, rather than the slaves of network television.

What greater challenge is there?

Forward!

1982

THE GREAT ELECTRIC TIME MAZE

RAY BRADBURY

CREATOR OF

FANTOCCINI LTD.

Presents a concept

for an entertainment park encounter.

Exhausting to write, exhausting to read!

THE GREAT ELECTRIC TIME MAZE

Incorporating

THE YESTERMORROW TIME EXPERIENCE

THE TIME STREAM RESTAURANT COMPLEX

THE ANYTIME, ANYWHERE STOP AND SHOP AT YOUR LEISURE SPACE

Eat! Live! Shop!

Past! Present! Future!

Explore the Pyramid!

Hunt the Dinosaur!

Fall out beyond Andromeda!

Run from the dark AC-DC Hound!

Get lost and split in a Thermonuclear Lab!

ALL IN ONE PLACE

TIME MAZE ONE

Restoring Energy

Which is what

Ristorantes/Restaurants

are all about…

revving up with food ahead of

time in order to be ready for

The Experiences!

You can't get there from here.

…or…

If you're not careful, Arriving's a bore.

Being on a Journey is the Way and the Life, and being Lost is Best of All!

So the first thing we are, when we enter the First Maze is:

Lost.

Beautifully lost, that is, in something like the alleys of

Paris, the vast spiderweb risings and fallings of ways and byways in the Casbah…

A touch of London waterfront, with fog here…

A remembrance of Shanghai or Hong Kong there…

The Tivoli just beyond…

And beyond that, a twist to find Dublin, a turn to discover Venice, a roundabout to Rome, upstairs to Vienna, downstairs to Flamenco Madrid caverns…

What we have here, of course, is a multiplicity, a plethora, a maze of restaurants, large and small, foreign and domestic, where the hot dog blends with the pizza, which blends with the falafel, which wanders over into the strudel and the cream bun, the coffee and aperitif outdoor cafe. All the textures, colors, smells we can borrow from every street, cornucopia alleyway, every burrow and lost corner of Piccadilly or Montmartre, Florence or downtown Barcelona, let us borrow, let us build, let us light. The overall flavor in the air might well be the smell of coffee being roasted somewhere in the deeps of New Orleans—but the scent reaches us here. Our noses should lead us even before our eyes see the Maze and can hardly wait to be lost.

Because the maze of restaurants, twining in and out of history, should circle and re-circle itself so that it might take three or four visits before you figure out where everything is. In the meantime you are delightfully blundering into sitdown cafes, stand-up hot dog stands, lounge-around beer halls, take-your-time-forever French restaurants, instant-ice billets. The overall smell may be coffee, but the overall sound is tasting, chewing, swallowing. It is a Sea of Eats.

It follows that your uncommon tourist, wandering these territories will stumble upon not only uncommon times but uncommon foods, moving down through history or across continents.

At dinnertime, why not climb aboard the largest locomotive in the world to find that its interior is really a kitchen with stoves, ovens, and preparation tables. The steam from its kitchen would plume from the locomotive stack, of course, to be ventilated off. Behind the locomotive with its hidden bakery would be a procession of flatcars sporting, as it were, tables positioned in the open. An illusion of travel would run past them on surrounding film-projection walls as they felt themselves ride through an endless tunnel of images. As the dining flatcars rocked gently on their gimbals, and the silverware chimed sweetly, the diners would gaze out at Irish meadows, French vineyards, or the Indian buttes or mesas of Cheyenne or Taos. A different travel view every hour, a different journey, considered and ticketed in advance, every day. And the menu, prepared to fit the scenery: gazpacho nearing Catalonia, *foie gras* leaving Paris. Or, hell,

why not an art history tour? The gourmet locomotive steaming through Provence and the multimillion sunflower fields to track-measure Van Gogh. Or an endless excursion sideswiping Monet's oil or watercolored Giverny flower gardens and lily ponds? Or El Greco's electric-fire-green-blue mountains, capable of birthing taffy-pull-elongated Christian saints? What a train, what far-travelings, what real and unreal remembrances!

Those who shun that special dining-seeing train (what a loss!), can board the Tea Trolley just beyond. It would resemble a San Francisco cable car or one of those smaller red bread-box-sized trolleys that used to sail the streets of Los Angeles. At four in the afternoon, how fine to see the Tea Trolley nested with three dozen ladies, or gents, sluicing the Indian brew over their teeth and devouring crumb cakes, yes?

Along the way, in the heavens above the Maze, a Zeppelin or Blimp shape, suspended, into which, if you wish, you can be hauled straight up by a harnessed-seat-rescue-device into a floating, soaring—or so it cinematically projected seems—restaurant where you can eat as you fly over New York, London, Paris, or Rio.

On through the maze, we have, finally, four to five dozen cafes, restaurants, soda founts, which we can add or subtract to infinity… including… yes?…

The Longest Soda Fountain in the World… a grand long parade of stools, one hundred in all, count 'em, all the way down the line, duplicating sweetly, succulently, the Longest Bar in the World in Tijuana. Faced with mirrors, of course, so you can fatten your eyes with the grand sight of yourself or your chum in the reflecting glass while you fatten your stomach. Then up and out and around, to the end of the Energy-Restoring-Restaurant Maze, to the entrance of: The Experiences!

Are you ready for this? Still with me?

TIME MAZE TWO!

Where Anything Can Happen, And Always Does!

The Second Time Maze is across an Abyss of Stars, separated from the First Maze, straight down, and, seemingly straight up, by a billion light years of stars in all directions. In order to cross over the abyss, there are a number of game stations where the head of any party of two, three, or four or more would play a laser beam game which, if

won, totalling up to some particular sum, would cause a bridge to jut across from one side of the First Maze to the Second's side.

The Second Maze, as seen from a distance, would be like a small City, seemingly suspended in space, turning slowly. An illusion, of course, the outer wall might circle about, with light patterns on the other walls giving a semblance of motion. The entire structure, perhaps like a double pyramid, one upright, one upside down, would have a series of doors in the various faces, and every few minutes, or every thirty seconds, a new door would be presented, with a different date on the facing, representing a different age, Past or Future, or, for that matter Far Away and Mysterious Present! What we are playing here, for the moment, is a variety of Time Roulette.

The facade of the Fantoccini Great Electric Time Maze Two gives one an immediate idea of the wonders that lie waiting, and humming inside.

Across the front, in giant metaphorical symbols, some electric robots, others in mural form, are representations of all the Times that wait within the portals. Here a great dinosaur lurks, there Jupiter rises as Saturn sets, up here an Egyptian pyramid looms, while below is a thermonuclear lab, an AC-DC electromagnetic Mechanical Hound spiders its eight legs until, like the wings of a hummingbird, they almost vanish!

Each Adventurer (customer) is given a computerized card or a small computer with which to give options for action within the Maze.

The Adventurers are led, 20 or 30 at a time, into a chemical-nuclear-electronic laboratory of immense size and incredible flexibility; it is all storms of electric power, and great screens on which Past, Present, Future thrive in images. At the center of the Lab is the Time Centrifuge. One of the Adventurers is asked to Volunteer to get into the Spinner to be Spun off into Time.

Someone volunteers… a boy or a girl preferably, though it could be an older person. The Volunteer (a real customer *or* an actor who is a permanent employee of the Maze) enters the Yestermorrow Centrifuge and the Physicist-in-Charge then asks the crowd to vote via magnetic card or computer device, on where the Volunteer Voyager shall be sent.

The vote is taken! It totals up on the screen—dinosaurs perhaps, hound Maze maybe, Alpha Centauri, could be! Lost in the pyramids, why not?!

Bang! A switch is thrown. The Yestermorrow Centrifuge whirls, groans, explodes with energy and breaks down! "My God!" cries the Physicist. "Our machine has miscalculated! Our Volunteer has vanished! See! But to what planet, what place, what time, where, how, why?"

And, indeed, the Machine has slowed and is empty. The Volunteers are now asked to vote, where to go, how to find, in what place and time to search for the lost Time Traveler!

They vote! They choose—perhaps—the Future! The Cosmic Reaches, the Star Deeps!

"Enter!" cries the Physicist. "Off you go to find our lost child!"

They enter the Centrifuge, which holds one person or 30, depending on need and use. Bang! The switch is thrown! As they vanish off in time they hear the Physicist cry: "I hope *this* time it works, and *we* don't get lost somewhere *else*!" *Whoommmmm!* They lurch, spin, accelerate, travel! And… arriving by misadventure, or by computerized selection in a time roughly a billion years back of beyond, the Travelers are given kopi-helmets and electronic guns and sent out on paths through the jungle where, at one time or another, they will encounter varieties of prehistoric beasts and must be prepared to fire their electric rifles at the creatures to frighten them off. The beasts rise and attack from different positions in different ways and at different speeds every time a new mob of Hunters runs through. They must be hit in the eyes, of course, with the electric guns. Failing to score a hit will cause the monster beast to tilt forward and, with magnetic claws, seize the rifle away, thus "disarming" the Adventurer. The last Hunter to be disarmed, or who makes it through the Prehistoric Maze, having scored all hits, is the Winner, and gets to choose, for all the rest, where they will continue their Hunt for the Lost Child, Lost Man, or Lost Woman—who can be heard screaming, incidentally, from time to time, as they hunt through the Maze.

During all of the above adventures, of course, some of the Yestermorrow Travel Guides who accompany the Hunters, are snatched off into the sky and carried off by Pterodactyls, or grabbed and plunged down, sinking into quicksands by the Thunder Lizards… so that the Customers feel a true sense of danger as they blunder through the Jungle Maze toward Survival.

At the finale, with all the Hunters disarmed, save one, the Survivor, the Victor, hearing the cry of the Victim, off in another Time, punches the Computer, the Hunters rush from the jungle and—the next option is Space! Where, from a long way off, falling deep into Space we hear the voice of the Lost Hunter, the Time Abandoned Child, the Boy, the Girl, or the Man or Woman spun in the Time Centrifuge and ricocheted off Saturn, Pluto, and Beyond!

The Adventurers pile into a Space Pod or Rocket Module, 20 or 30 per Pod or Module, and blast off! Right up along the Statue of Liberty, by God. We have taken off from the base of the Statue and now zoom-fire up the Lady's body to her arm and along her arm to her torch and the torch points at the universe, so—we GO THERE!

Bang! And drop into the Star Deeps.

The Pod may well be controlled by one Volunteer amongst the Adventure Mob, who has a minute or less at the controls. If he is hit, if he allows the Pod to be hit, by a meteor, or lets a Comet glance off and spin the Pod, he relinquishes the control to the next in line. We circumnavigate the Universe, move through meteor clusters, follow Ghost Comet, fly by Saturn, plunge toward the Great Bloodshot Eye of Jupiter, clockwheel around the huge spiral of Andromeda and—come home.

On the way we hear the Voice of the Doomed Lost Hunter crying, "I'm falling into the Sun! I'm going to hit the Moon. Save me! I'm being carried away in an Asteroid cluster. Help!" We run to follow and catch.

Whichever pilot comes through with the least hits from meteors, opts for the next Encounter, the next Game!

A variation on this would be to place 30 people in 30 individual pods, or suspend them in flying belts, which fire off with great lovely rocket noise from their backs! Suspending individuals in dark space would enable us to convince each Hunter that he or she was actually being flung into the Sun or was about to band the Moon! Or drown in the tidal waves of Andromeda's vast shorelike seas of stars. The Hunters would see their friends flying all about them, suspended of course by invisible black extension rods, and the sense of excitement and lonely terror would be—for the most—exhilarating! Again, who ever maneuvers best, alone or in a group, gets to make the option for a New Hunt, when all have landed.

Moving right along… we arrive in…

The Mechanical Hound Maze… where…

The Adventurer, as he or she enters is given a computerized belt, which is worn around the midriff of each fleeing person. Nearby, as the belts are being put on the various members of the "Expedition," the electric Mechanical Hound waits in its computerized kennel, now and again making fairly dreadful noises, fairly ominous sounds.

This is a Maze through which the Adventurers run to escape the Hound. Only one of the Adventurers has a belt, which is computerized to fit the numbers fed to the Hound. The Hound then runs in pursuit. Not knowing which of them is the Victim, the people in the Maze flee in all directions. Screaming Furies, bellowing dire electric storm threats, the Hound seeks, searches, races, runs, and at last, finds!

When it zeroes in on its running victim, it seizes him or her by fastening, magnetically, to the back side, the metal side, of the belt, thus stopping all flight. In the moment of capture, the Hound shrieks with accomplishment, gives its victim a mild electric shock perhaps, nothing that can hurt, and the game is over. Or it continues after the

Victim is dispatched through a secret door into another Area, where it waits for the other Adventurers to catch up. Out of 30 people involved in each Chase, perhaps three might be thus Captured before the Hound herds everyone out of the Game Maze Field, and the next adventure begins…

We step forward and find ourselves in…

An area between the great Lion Paws of the Sphinx where we are confronted by hieroglyphic doors that caw and purr and growl, each symbol making its own death sounds and noise—the Raven, the Jackal, the Alligator. Ra speaks here from his Sun. Anubis whispers. All the Egyptian gods, standing in ranks near the Paws, speak and promise: Darkness and Light, Light and Darkness.

We enter the Sphinx Tomb and are told that a passage leads from it to the interior of the Pyramid nearby where—maybe—our Lost Hunter has been buried.

The doors of the Sphinx fly open. We hear a far shriek, wail, cry, like someone falling down an elevator shaft—the Hunter being carried away. We must follow. We *must* find!

We enter and are truly lost in a Tomb Maze. We confront sarcophagi inside, which the Lost Child hammers to get free, weeping. Or we meet up with mummies stashed along the way, with the sound of desert sands whispering behind their linen wraps. Or we traffic-stop in mid-catacomb to see a royal pharaoh's funeral procession. We watch Egyptian priests and courtiers trek a golden king into the mortuary deeps. Or we collide with a Mirror Maze in which our images deflesh themselves, becoming unwrapped mummy skeletons. Or find ourselves trapped by a burial sand avalanche as the tomb slams its door, grinds shut its granite teeth to lock us in—forever.

But then, at last, we reach the heart of the Pyramid, to stare up and down air shafts, which rise to great heights and plunge to great depths. So we have puzzled our way all through this Maze. And the first Hunter to reach the far tomb Exit gets to option further travels, farther places.

Other Options to be considered and built as we go, would be:

The October Country!

Where the Hunters move through graveyards, ride on a Halloween Tree Carousel, a merry-go-round in which, on every other brass pole, a skeleton horse is hung, and riders resembling witches, sorcerers, headless horsemen, skeletons, Hamlet's father's ghost, slide up and down out of the upper reaches of the lit Pumpkin tree as the carousel spins to Ghost Pavannes… and… perhaps, the horses take off from the carousel and fly over October Country, passing, on the way, the upper reaches of Notre Dame, where the gargoyles speak to us with dust blowing from their mouths to make the whispered words, or

rain making their stone tongues speak, or wind rustling their teeth to annunciate Time… then back to the Carousel Base… and off on another adventure…

What next…?

Perhaps, moving along through October Country we encounter a great dark Haunting Place on the Half-shell, at various levels… as we enter we see the Running Runaway, the Lost Boy, Girl, Man, Woman, the Hiding One, racing upstairs to Hide somewhere in this vast Hide and Seek Place.

The other Hunters must now investigate every area of the Half-shell House, every closet full of night, every basement full of dark, every attic full of grotesque junk, which… moves.

This may well be the Last Hunt, the Last Adventure of our circuit. When the final picture is pried open like a door, or a clock is popped wide to reveal, the Hiding Hunter is Found, and the finale is at hand. The Half-shell House shakes with an earthquake of clocks, and we are invited to… leave.

It follows that in all of the encounters and adventurers and hunts described herein we can mix and match as we please… the adventures will never be quite the same each time through… the dinosaurs will rise at different intervals, the ghosts will arrive and depart on different schedules, the Egyptian maze will never repeat itself exactly. Varieties of tapes can be used, and varieties of projections… and varieties of lights and sounds… And, in our opinion, we will arrive at these Places in different sequence, with perhaps a fall through Space first, then the October Country adventure, followed by the dinosaurs, in any order that the Hunter wishes.

Other options that come to mind, to be built and locked in over the months or years:

A Storm Maze, where, amongst hills and mountaintops we watch the Weather of the World being formed and sent out in raving hurricanes and dreadful lightning winds, clamoring about us as we watch and listen.

A Maze of Shadows and Sounds where we wander in the voices of 1920 and 1030 and the musics of 1910 and 1039, and with shadow puppets and shadow marionettes rising and flying and falling all about us… and so on and so forth and so on and on and… on. *Name Your Poison… We'll Build It!*

* * *

Had enough? Hold on! Let's move out into the final, the Third Time Maze!

And what is it?

After Time Maze One, the restaurants, and Time Maze Two, the Wild Adventures, we now have time for—*Shopping!*

Getting lost for the third time!!! In a maze of Shops From All Ages, from the Past, the Present, and the Future.

Everything we remember from eating, everything we remember from *Living* in the past few hours, we now apply to the adventure of shopping and taking home remembrances of the two first Maze experiences.

So, at our leisure, remembering all this, we shop, we buy, we take home bits of London, Dublin, Pre-History, Far Centauri. We wander in a Maze of shopping even as we wandered in a maze of eating and wild journeyings.

A veritable museum of shops is here, a Maze attached to a Maze attached to a Maze…

So we now enter the Great Victoria, East India and Far Orient Book Shoppe, where we find a solid escarpment, a vast cliff of books reaching up, up, up into the intellectual heavens about us, on three grand layers. It is probably the longest bookstore on Earth, stretching for as far as the eye can see! This, accomplished, of course, by the fact that the bookstore not only runs for some 90- to 100-feet-deep, but when it reaches the far terminus of reality, is taken up by a *trompe l'oeil* painting of the same stacks, which stretch off towards what might be Bombay, could be Tokyo, are most certainly leaning toward Shangri-La.

Similarly, looking up, the stacks that neatly climb the escarpment, continue on into the heavens as far as the eye can see in *that* direction! Endless ladders and rungs of books to be climbed by bright, seeking apefolks—us!

What calls us there? On occasions, shadows of trees and monkeys scurrying from branch to branch, limb to leaf, in soft chattering excursions, along with the faint echo of Tarzan summoning us—high!

Or, on occasion, Apollo's chariot may pass over that endless heaven, followed in good time, by an image of Ra, a Persian god of fire, or a flying carpet. Surprise-surprise-surprise—a flock of birds heading south—clouds moving north—bombers on their way to a war —rockets taking off for Far Centauri—all projected on that imaginative sky.

At either end of the bookstore is a circular stairway up which we can ascend to the three levels. Perhaps the children's level is at the very top?… For wouldn't children, above all, wish to climb circular stairs more than anyone else? And, anyway, up there Tom Swift and Nancy Drew and Buck Rogers and Tarzan and Mary Poppins would be calling (softly, please) with rocket voices and the muted clamor of

space wars. Perhaps the top floor would also be inhabited by the science fiction and fantasy books, where the still young humans come—from age fourteen to twenty-four or thirty. Again, motivation is important here and s-f/fantasy is read by climbers, reachers, wanderers—the most popular fiction in America today, especially among young adults and adults not yet ready to admit they have hit forty.

Before ascending to those heights, however, let the eye wander over the comfortable lounge chairs gathered in twos or threes before several fireplaces on the opposing wall of our longest-highest Victorian Book Shoppe. Here, if they wish, readers can gather to read or chat in the light of those nice, mellow, jungle-green glass reading lamps that soften the air and touch the mind to relax and enjoy.

Coffee should be available at all hours for a reasonable sum to be deposited, on the honor system, in a porcelain plate near the urn.

On the main floor would be, one would suppose, current best-sellers in a variety of fields, with a dark alcove at the far end, perhaps, for mysteries, old and new—a miniature, cobwebbed maze to itself, and entered, perhaps, by a squealing, half-secret door.

On the second level up the spiral stair would be the arts, philosophy, the social sciences, essays in various fields, theater, and cinema.

As we climb the stairs, the various book sections, by title, whisper to us: Here I am: Kipling! Jane Austen, here! And here gentle voices at tea or passing herds of antelope, dimly rising and fading.

Among the shelves would be robot heads, which speak the mysteries of nearby books, the head of a pirate here, the head of a rocket engineer there, along with little scenes, dioramas, half-mechanized, showing us vistas of scenes from books. And there are poke-holes, allotted here or there where a child, or an adult, if they wish, can poke their heads through into space environments, jungle environments, private dioramas, with music, for one person at a time…

Along with, here and there, reading cubbies where one person can curl up and read, or window seats with visions of far, special countries; again for one child or one older person at a time.

And finally, descending, wouldn't it make sense that there would be a basement Egyptian tomb, in which we stash and keep all the books on archeology, the natural sciences, anthropology, etc. An Egyptian mummy in full panoply, would stand at the mouth of the Learning Tomb telling you what wonders waited below in the Basement of Old Time. You go down into the Ages, even as you would go down into the digs of ancient cities. Rome, Athens, Thebes, Tyre, Nineveh, The Hanging Gardens, lie below.

At the bottom of the stairs we read: The Library at Alexandria and half, at least, of our experience downstairs is wandering into an environment with papyrus stashed here and scrolls tumbled there; the old and long lost Library of Egypt.

Every shelf would have its burden of sweet, new books, but for at least a foot or so on each shelf, a remnant of Old Time, a mask, a mummy's face, a scarab beetle, or a simple gathering of old cuneiform books or papyrus. It is a tomb, alright, but a tomb that worships life, living, learning, instead of Egyptian death. Who would not want to go down those stairs to relight their inner fires?

Somewhere in our Time Maze shopping center should be a miniature cinema whose name might be: The Knights Of The Last Reel Elite Cinema (Or: Great Dreams, Great Scenes Repeated By The Dozen) where you go to see the favorite of all the scenes in your most beloved films. Here, for eight minutes is that fabulous scene where Lawrence goes back over the Arabian desert to find the lost camel driver and returns in triumph—a triumph of human endeavor, plus a triumph in filmmaking.

Here are the last ten minutes, and the best of *Snow White*. Here are the last eight minutes of *Sleeping Beauty*, with Maleficent Turned Dragon in all her evil glory. Here comes Norma Desmond down the stairs for her last closeup. There hangs Quasimodo from his gargoyles or ringing his bells. Here dies Juliet and then Romeo. Next comes Rosebud tossed on the fire at the finale of *Citizen Kane*. Here are the last four minutes of *Things To Come* when the rocket rises toward Destiny and Cabell (Raymond Massey) asks, "Which shall it be? The stars? Or nothing?" A glorious theater, in sum, where you can duck in for an hour of your delicious memory treats, eight minutes of this, five of that, with *Bugs Bunny* thrown in for dessert. Tickets? Fifty cents of a buck!

* * *

Thus, in a single evening, we have been lost—gladly, in a womb of restaurants, only to plunge ourselves into a wilderness of Space and Time, so as to emerge and wander a labyrinth of shops from 400 B.C., 1066 A.D., 1928 America, sixteenth-century Persia, Shogun Japan, and the year 3199 in the Impossible Future. Three ways of choosing life detours so as to vanish out of your ordinary life. It's all here, count 'em, go, choose, *do*!

Some nights, or days, you come for the Restaurant Maze,
Or the Wild Experiences.
Or merely shop.

Choose or Mix. Then go home with a new Psyche in your blood.

As for me, I've just read all I've written. Exhausted, I think I'll lie down!

1990

A FEASTING OF THOUGHTS, A BANQUETING OF WORDS

Ideas on the Theater of the Future

Imagine a room with 40 men and women seated with empty chairs on either side of them. Eighty chairs in all, but only 40 occupied. It is a robot's banquet in the year 2010, and I have been invited.

I enter and am greeted with a chorus of voices. The men and women at the tables raise their glasses to me and call out.

"Here, no here, here, no here!"

And I sit now with Plato, now with Aristotle, now with Emily Dickinson, in a great feasting of thoughts and a banqueting of words.

"Dear Mr. Bradbury!"

Plato seizes my hand briskly.

"Sir," I say. "How goes it with your Republic?"

"Do you really want to know?"

"Of course. How does this whole place work? The company of poets. The room of artists. The museum of philosophy. The corridor of history—?"

"Enough! You have asked much, allow me to make a brief response. Not long ago a boy, quite small, but very curious, came here. His journey makes a fine small tale."

"I'm ready," I say.

"Well then. The boy ran through the Robot Museum of Time and Place and thought and stared in at that door marked, *Greece."*

There, far across a moonlit plain, under a big tree, breaking bread and drinking wine, sat three old men in white robes. They waved.

The boy approached their table, carefully. He listened to the gentle hum of their hidden machineries, and said:

"Shouldn't I be afraid of you? People say: machines dehumanize people. Yes?"

"People say," Plato laughed gently. "Sit down, boy. Join us in a… Dialogue. Do we look as if we might corrupt people with our cogs, wheels, and electric circuits?"

"Well…"

"Two thousand years ago," said the Aristotle robot, "simple machines stood before our temples. Coins, put in those machines, dispensed holy water. Even then we said, what other miracles, strange or terrifying, might be born of science."

“And,” said the third man, Socrates, “new miraculous machines were born over the years.”

“And were they bad or good?” asked the boy.

“Neither. In between. Like animals, machines know not themselves. So you cannot blame *or* praise a machine.”

“Yet people do,” said Plato. “Men have always feared new ideas arriving, especially when they jump up in three-dimensional forms, devices that move and do things by themselves.”

“Reconsider, Plato. Are there no machines in the long history since we were born and died and are reborn again as robots speaking truths, are there absolutely no machines one can call evil, or saintly?”

“None.”

“None?” asked the boy.

“None and more than none. From the time of our Apollo god to the time of your Apollo rockets, boy, no machines deserved to be tried, found guilty, named murderer and destroyed.”

“But some folks—”

“Yes, some folks revile and loathe, abhor and shudder at the very thought of machines that ‘think.’” But ours are borrowed thoughts, boy. We do but speak old breakfast truths at lunch. We are electric sparrows that peck at ancient bread crumbs. People ask the wrong questions. Ask not if this machine is evil or good, but if this machine or that teases some men to do evil or good.”

“Can machines make men do things?”

“Not really, no. Men have free will, do they not?”

“I had always supposed so.”

“Nevertheless, machines tempt men. They are the Snake and the Apple in this modern garden world. By simply existing, machines provoke.”

“For example?”

“Well, look at those millions of chariot cars, drawn up at the curb. They cloud the air with heavenly vapors. They charge the wind with power. They call all young men to connive in their own destruction. So off they leap and roar away. Is the machine guilty when they die?”

“No, man-plus-machine is guilty,” said Aristotle.

“Sadly true. And the machine, by simply standing as a fair woman stands unknowing in the marketplace, demands action. Men give to the machine what it lacks, impulse and will. Together they spell doom.”

“Machines then can, by their design, their color, their shape, their idea, lead us astray?”

“Was Eve’s apple evil? No. But eating it was. The car is not evil. But driving that same car when filled with fermented grain is self-murder most foul.”

“If, by their design, some machines tempt us, doesn’t it follow that other machines, differently designed, will hold to the Golden Mean?”

“We are such machines.”

“Vanity, Plato, vanity. Are we never wicked?”

“We could be programmed for wickedness, to teach the immoral and the debauched. But good men have tinkered with our electromagnetic gizzards. Our sound tripes are excellent. We keep the best. We speak wisdom. We promote humanity.”

“But we are not wise in ourselves?”

“The men who built us are wise. They set the first example. We set the second example by existing. All those who listen and follow us set the third. Together, we make a common race slowly rising to, rather than away from, the sun.”

“If this is true, why then do people cry out against machines and not the men who use them to bad ends?”

“It is the same impulse that makes one damn the racket when the shuttlecock behaves poorly on the summer air, or blast the turf when the golf ball veers. We are the recipients of wrath, dear Aristotle, because we stand in the midst of events. We machines move, often, when man himself stands still. We are an impulse that simulates life. Don’t be surprised if the curses that are hurled at the automobile sometimes ricochet off and strike us. Each and every machine is a teacher, is it not, simply by being an idea in motion? The car teaches power and speed as well as exhilaration. The rifle teaches destruction. The hydrogen bomb teaches, ironically, Christian principles. By its very size it says: Everyone sit down! In the midst of all this, we and other machines go about the fields of cities, toiling and spinning.”

“What other machines lean us toward light rather than dark, Plato? Let us make a list.”

“Motion picture projectors, tape recorders, radios, records, television, each speak books when books are not present but, better, turn us around to books if books we have never tried.”

“The camera, then, is a simple machine that does vast things?”

“By taking proper pictures, yes, it dissolves the flesh of three billion people to make us all one. By showing us the great Earth from Space, it proves we are one race of many fantastic parts, each needful of the others’ survival, each wanting to know the other. And now the time of knowing is at hand, and we splendid, huge new Toys are here to help the knowing. Right, boy?”

“I—” said the boy.

“In sum, fear not machines but men. And fear not men but merely half-educated men. To those we must add a half of ourselves, hoping to make one creature of two parts. Man joined to woman makes

marriage. Mind joined to mind flints ignorance on ignorance, erodes prejudice, and fires the hearth where all may sit to warm hands and minds. Well then, boy, how do you like our answers?"

"Swell!" said the boy.

"Do you recall in my *Dialogues* I speak of men living each in his own cave, looking upon dim walls to see shadows of the outside world, each guessing what that truth may be? Well, boy, we are the new shadows, played not only on walls for men to guess, but as shapes that walk and may be touched. Time's up. Goodbye. Run, boy, run."

"I'm running, thanks."

"Oh, boy?" The boy stopped. Plato called, "Do you fear us now?"

"Oh, no, no. Thanks. Goodbye!"

"There," said Plato, gently. "The boy's gone. And we? Are we *really* here, my friends?"

"Yes and no. Good Plato, we are a mystery and a paradox. Let us speak on that."

"Yes, even though we hear without hearing and tell without telling."

The old men sat in the drowsy shade of eternal noon.

"Someone begin," said Plato.

All talked at once.

"Much thanks," I said, and I rose and changed seats and spoke to Sara Teasdale and Sir Beerbohm Tree. And I rose to go now with William Butler Yeats and take tiffin with Shakespeare as he gave me Richard's first dark speech. So I moved around the endless table, breaking my fast with splendid words, meeting and basking with talented people reborn in robots to outlast time.

All this, Theater of the Future?

Yes, or one variety thereof.

What other shapes will Future Theater take?

Will it be truly new and exciting and alive? Will people swarm to it as they once swarmed, wild bees in need of pontifical-political-aesthetic honey?

Will multimedia grab it all and own it?

Will theater vanish into the darkness behind the silver screen only to reappear with larger vocal cords, bigger ears, wider body, vaster significance?

In other words, will everything become one big hard-rock festival, super-radio, Cinerama-TV Long-Playing Cinema?

Or can the quiet voice, well-articulated, small idea well ventilated, single actor well-educated and speaking very much alone and softly, prevail?

It is too early on in the twenty-first century to say.

One can guess, but one cannot truly tell.

I have guessed at the influence of holograms on our lives, in one instance.

By the sheerest of accidents I ran across some old friends one night a few years back. They were on their way to someone's apartment, and invited me to come along to sit in on a séance with some newly invented "ghosts."

Which is to say three-dimensional images tossed forth on the air before, or rather in, one's eyeballs, shot there by the expert marksmanship of a laser-beam projector.

With my first view of these holographic ghosts, I thought, my God, how wonderful to come back once every fifty years for the next ten-thousand years to see what we'll be up to in the Arts. We'll be turning ourselves inside out, upside-down, wrongside-to with light, color, sound, and the speaking of previously unspeakable tongues! Lord give me that gift. Let me come back, let me hear and see and know!

In the year 2035, not so far off across the sill, I imagined a typical home where, white or cocoa-tinted (which will be very *in* that year) men, women, and children, will exercise rather than exorcise their "ghosts."

The son summons up the Hound of the Baskervilles, which lurks in the shadows of his bedroom. It bounds forth, projected in three dimensions, by a laser-beam photo "emanator" hidden in his ceiling.

Simultaneously, the daughter calls for and is answered by Kathie, who rushes in a storm of snow, across the floor of her living quarters to vanish in the cold hills of Wuthering Heights.

The father speaks to and is answered by Hamlet's Father's Ghost, who rises in battlements and speaks memory and prophecy in one intonation.

The mother, kitchen-bound, is instructed by a three-dimensional holograph of a Cooking Witch, who appears in clouds of steam but vanishes in mists of spice.

Late at night, each person, attended by their own laser-ghost, beds down, touches a panel-button and sees first the Hound sink into the long grass of the Moor, then Kathie lost in storms, dwindling into the nap of the rug, then Hamlet's Father turned to a mist within a mist, and the Cooking Witch with a last steam-kettle sigh, jackstraw heaping herself in a corner to melt, gone, all gone, and the time of sleep come.

Theater. Not just in a large house on a vast stage, but whispering at your ear, jiggling your elbow and your subconscious. Robot mosquitoes sizzling about your head as if it were a cider jug, repeating Pasts, advising Futures.

Theater.

What other ways will it walk in the years ahead?

During the past few years I have helped organize a Theater of Philosophy course at Santa Ana College. Within the classroom context, and occasionally using a semi-theater, we have begun plans to stage what was always a stage piece from the beginning: Plato's *Republic*. Burgess Meredith appeared to dramatize sections of the books of Don Juan by Castaneda. I took off and flew around a bit with Kazantzakis' religious/philosophical explosion, *The Saviours of God.* For the Future, the possibility of staging Shaw's play Prefaces, with not just one but why not two Shaws on stage? Played by two actors engaged in verbal colics and amiable deliriums? *Shaws I and II* I call it; and I have finished a manuscript on this with Shaw Positive and Shaw Negative filling an evening with his Prefaces, his Musical Criticisms, his occasional despair with mankind, and his hopes for the Life Force and mouth-to-mouth breathing the Universe to survive.

What else up ahead?

Robot theaters of history. Rooms into which you walk to see humanoid machines seated under trees on a summer afternoon and walk over to sit with them and say, "Caesar, how go the Roman roads through Britain?" And he shows you. And: "Euripides and Aristotle, how does one write a play, a poem?"

And they tell you.

And you then trade wisdoms, your *large* one for their small ones, eh? And they treat you as a crony, as one of their bright crowd, which makes you grow and grow and grow.

What a wine press to lovingly crush a student in. Aristotle's shoulder to one side, Euripides to the other, and—*smunch!* You're educated by yammer and blab and gab.

Well, say you, since you speak of Future Theater, what have you, sir, done about it? Your plans, your ideas, your plays?

I toss my baggage in and travel with Shaw, who, I would like to think, might be amused at the company. The theater of ideas is my meat and drink, but, one hopes, without being ecclesiastical, without pontificating or browbeating. If an idea doesn't surprise people and win them by passionate and entertaining means, you had best give up and go find a soapbox and install yourself on a street corner.

I have begun to write a series of plays about that future, which is no further off than one minute after midnight tonight. If we are to live in space for the next two billion years, give or take a million, then we must have reasons for doing so.

The propaganda for such theater can exist in many forms. I began my first experiments with this when the United States Pavilion people at the New York World's Fair in 1964–65 asked me to create a ride in the top of the building. Circuiting the darkness on a traveling

platform, five-hundred years of American history "happened" to the viewers wending their way through one hundred ten cinema screens of all sizes and shapes, accompanied by a narrator and a full symphony orchestra. It was my job to tell us what we were, what we are, and what we can hope to be. We were, I said, the people of the triple wilderness, who crossed a wilderness of sea to come here, a wilderness of grass to stay here, and now, late in time, move toward a wilderness of stars to live forever.

The metaphor worked. At the conclusion of our theatrical excursion, a thousand rocket ships took off in a furnace of fire to move toward Alpha Centauri and beyond, surrounding the audience with the passion and desire for flight and, hopefully, for the genetic survival of mankind at the end of that flight.

Theater? Of course it was. A variation of same. Even more theatrical was the enterprise that took me out to the WED Enterprises building in Glendale. The Disney Robot Factory, is what I call it, if they will forgive me.

My job there in theater? To seize a few dozen audio-animatronic robot humanoid creatures and fashion a five-billion-year history of Earth coming out of the sun, cooling and bringing forth in its seas the animalcules that one would one day shape spines, and stride in teeming apecrews of men, women, and children, using fire along the way.

I had Michelangelo spring feverishly from the platform pit as artist magician, a robot who pointed over the audiences' heads and ordered the ceilings to change. Then I blueprinted the hidden and miraculous machineries of this extraordinary theater to paint, before their uplifted gaze, the Sistine Chapel ceiling and walls over and around and above them. In two minutes flat they would experience what it took Michelangelo hundreds of days to paint.

Supertheater. Wouldn't you, wouldn't I, like to be in a theater where we could see *that* happen at least once a year every year of our lives?

For this experience, acted out by robots, accompanied by orchestras and voices, I imagined ape-men robots who, before your eyes, turned into Egyptian priests, then divested themselves to become da Vinci among his fabled machines, Ben Franklin struck to ashes by lightning, the Wright brothers, goggled and elated on Kitty Hawk sand dunes, and finally a man of the future, X-rayed, in whose body we might see the destiny of man. For super-photographed, shot through with probing light, each of us in our cells and molecules is the sun energy we eat and drink each day. In every drop of blood a million small bits of sun burn. Silhouetting a family of the future, I packed their bodies full with ten billion small suns so that the audience would

see a true metaphor: we are creatures that came out of the Sun long long ago, have lived by the sun and its energy hidden in foods, broken down to light and power in our flesh. And now we move up in space toward far suns to survive in their strange light and go on being solar creatures forever.

The machines described above could be used to turn classrooms into theaters of knowledge. The walls of future classrooms should be transparent so that Italian, French, or Chinese environments could be projected on them.

All this technical gimmickry, of course, is worthless unless a flesh and blood teacher stood alone, in control. These machines should be peripheral, not central. Come back in 40 years or less and you might well find film labs offering major pictures in which you yourself might appear. The leading roles in certain special electronically treated films would be shadowed out, untouched, undeveloped. You in your own home could then measure out a similar space in your own parlor, pace out the performance, act, speak, and photograph yourself so that your image would be superimposed on the film opposite a twenty-first-century Olivier, Burton or, God help us all, Sean Penn. If your performance was poor, the film could be stripped of your image by running it through an eraser, and you start over.

Or you could cross-pollinate performances with friends across the world, you doing your performance in Los Angeles on one half of a film-image, mailing it off to Paris, where some twenty-second-century Barrault would glue his image to the other half. The variations on this would be infinite. Great actor-teachers across the world could, by electronic tape, offer their instructive services by sharing such films with wild young Thespians in Timbuctoo, Waukesha, and Boyle Heights, who could claim: “There I am, there’s Barrymore, aren’t *I* great?” even if it wasn’t true!

But in the midst of this electronic bombardment, you ask somewhat irritably, what about little theater, small theater within the larger fencings.

But, of course, no matter how large the multimedia, or how complex the stage of twenty-first-century houses, the single actor in the lone spotlight will still be the thing.

Kids once left home for the big city because everything, meaning the arts and action, collisions of people, and sex, was there.

Between now and 2020, three hundred such small college towns, with simple, uncomplicated directly staged theater, must and will be built. They will embody by blueprint and dream, the things that cities once were or pretended to be before they, shot like mammoths, fell down dead.

In those new, small green villages, the old poetspeaker and teller

of tales will be reborn of late afternoons to speak through dusk into midnight.

Which leads us back to end as we began, in that huge banquet room with every other chair empty and every other chair propped with genius, aglow with wit, trembling with the energy of the robot man or woman placed therein.

I sit me down by robot Shaw. I shut my trap, he speaks my finale:

"Theater in the Future? How tiresome, how obvious, how easy! It will have a thousand shapes and sizes. Battery-assisted, electronically produced, technologically enhanced, it will still be the poet's province and the human's kennel if they dare to sing or most happily bark. It will still be one actor speaking to one listener, no matter how many seem to be eavesdropping. The means may be new but the message stays on as it was when we trembled at mouths of caves and invented fire: lost loves, lost opportunities, lost fortunes, lost wits, lost lives, and the strange small gain that we name wisdom and warm our souls at in the ridiculous night. Much claptrap as before, and small comforts like struck matches within. Would I like to come back every hundred years to check on the forever decline and forever resurrection of that vaudeville, which we call life and stage? No matter if projected on electric tube or lit by candle in a parlor? I would, by God, I would!! Now shut up young man, and eat your jam and biscuit!"

And shut up I do, and eat I will, and finished am I.

There's your Theater, or Theaters for Tomorrow.

What do you think?

1975

SCIENCE FICTION: BEFORE CHRIST AND AFTER 2001

The history of modern science fiction is so astonishing and mercurial that I feel I must sum it up for you.

Imagine yourself back in the year 1946, 1947, or 1948.

If you had wanted to read science fiction in those years, in book form, anyway, it would have been almost impossible. Only a handful of books were being published. The finest authors in the field, Heinlein, Sturgeon, Smith, and Van Vogt were being put in print by tiny publishing companies in small editions of a few thousand copies, which almost amounted to vanity publishing; that is to say—paying to have your own work published.

These books, when they did appear, were greeted by silence. Very few got reviewed anywhere in our country at any time. For all that the critics knew, these authors had never been born, much less got around to writing a book or even a story.

In the forties, also, only a handful of paperback s-f collections had begun to pop up. Science was exploding all over the place, but s-f was still asleep in the minds of the experts and the great mass of people.

I remember going to a party, evenly divided between writers and dancers from the New York City Ballet. Back in those years, once the people discovered what I did for a living, I was hooted at and called "Buck Rogers" and "Flash Gordon."

If the blacks of our country were a racial minority in the late forties and early fifties, the science-fiction writer was classed as a literary minority best not mentioned, better ignored. We would never go anywhere, do anything, or be anybody. We were rarely allowed to sell stories to the larger and more important magazines. And even in the s-f magazines, some of our more outrageous ideas were rejected and went unpublished.

In 1948, I wrote a story titled "Way in the Middle of the Air," concerning a group of southern blacks who, tired of repression, built their own rockets and went off to Mars. The story was rejected by about every magazine in the country, and I finally sold it, late in the day, to a small s-f magazine for $80.

Not long after, I wrote another story about a group of priests who, arriving on Mars, try to decide whether a creature that they encounter, a fiery spirit that drifts on the air, is or is not "human."

That story, "The Fire Balloons," suffered a similar history. Rejected everywhere, it was published many years later in a small s-f magazine in Chicago.

It is hard for us today to realize that once upon a time the civil rights movement didn't exist. And that once upon a time was 1948, 1949, 1950.

It is similarly hard for us to comprehend the vast power and influence of various religious groups in those same years. My story about the priests on Mars was rejected by editors, again and again, fearful of offending a wide variety of church thinkers, afraid of repercussions and criticism.

On a political level in early 1950, I wrote a story titled "And the Rock Cried Out." It told the tale of a white man and his wife who were trapped in an Indian village in South America, shortly after an atomic holocaust. The man and his wife were forced to shine shoes and wait on tables for an existence. The shoe was indeed suddenly on the other foot, for the story questioned whether the couple could make do, and accept being a white minority in a country of dark-skinned people.

Well, 1950 and the years immediately following were Joseph McCarthy years, the years of McCarthyism, years when our country was shadowed and bullied by our real and unreal fears concerning Communism in the world.

This story, like the other two, was rejected by editors afraid to tell a tale that, with all its simplicity, might be considered anti-American and therefore pro-Communist.

It is hard to remember an America so involved with such shadows and such fears.

So far, I have named only three areas into which science fiction shoved its nose again and again.

Racial relations.

Religion.

Politics.

Are there more? Yes.

Philosophy. Pure technology. Art on any level you wish to speak of it. Logic, Ethics, Social science. History. Witchcraft. Time travel.

Well, the list, as you begin to see, is endless.

Architecture? But of course! One of the grand thrills of being young and falling in love with science fiction was seeing the early drawings and paintings by men like Frank R. Paul on old magazine covers and inside with each story. They were more often than not pure architectural renderings of fantastic cities, incredible environments.

Growing up in science fiction was, then, growing up amidst Everything.

Do you see how lucky I was?

I grew up in the old field that reached out and embraced every

sector of the human imagination, every endeavor, every idea, every technological development, and every dream.

Is there a better way to grow up? I can think of none.

But even while I knew this, sensed this, lived this, the culture I lived in did not sense, know, live, or believe this.

As I have said, in the late forties, s-f was still Sleeping Beauty waiting to be kissed awake by atomic bombs, hydrogen explosions but, above all, Sputnik, then Neil Armstrong bootprinting the lunar soil for all mankind.

The earliest awakenings occurred from 1948 through 1950 when Doubleday and Simon & Schuster began to publish their own lines of science-fiction books, calling special attention to the incredible imaginative qualities within the field.

During those same years, Robert Heinlein was the first pulp s-f writer to shift over into *The Saturday Evening Post* with his, then remarkable, *Green Hills of Earth.*

I followed him a short time later.

But it was only in the Eisenhower years that we really got rolling. We are accustomed to think of Ike as a rather quiet president during whose terms not very much at all happened. The facts, in Space anyway, are otherwise. Long before Kennedy made his pitch in that direction, Eisenhower had, in effect, responded to the universe and the competition, if you wish, of Russia and Sputnik. We put our rockets and then our men, into trajectory. And it was a mild, supposedly conservative, father-image president who lit the fuse.

In the following years, from 1957 on up through this very summer, an incredible thing happened. Students began to teach teachers. They snowed them with science-fiction books and stories. The teachers held out for a long while, but then the really sly students placed a book on teacher's desk and said, "Read just the first chapter. If you don't like it, stop."

So the teachers muttered "Lord, Lord" under their breaths, took Heinlein or Asimov or Clarke home, read the first chapter and were hooked.

The rest is simple but amazing history. Dozens and then hundreds of books of science fiction began to be taught in junior high schools, high schools, and colleges. Dozens and then hundreds of courses and seminars sprang up around the old but newly discovered imaginative field.

Now, hardly a day passes that some new hardcover science fiction book isn't published. Now, no weekend is without a dozen new paperback s-f books hitting the newsstands.

Why has all this happened at this particular juncture in history? Why not 25 or 30 or, for that matter, 60 years ago?

I have no easy or complete answers. The easiest and most complete would run like this:

America, above all nations, has always been a country of ideas. We have always been revolutionary, in all the senses of that much overused word.

Somewhere, years ago, I used a term for us that I think fits more than ever. I called us a nation of Ardent Blasphemers. We ran about measuring not only how things *were* but how they *ought to be*. If the wilderness got in our way two hundred years ago, we chopped it down. If the English king and his smothering friends got in our way, we borrowed some revolutionary concepts, freshened them up, and chopped *him* down. If death and disease got in our way, we raised medicine to its greatest disciplines in the history of the entire world and chopped death down and cured disease and invented pain-killers. If distance got in the way, we chopped it in half by running locomotives down a track and shrinking time. If time got in the way, we raced the sun around the world with jets, and now rockets, and beat it, By Gosh and By Golly, beat it all hollow! We could make the sun rise and set half a dozen times a day by rushing with improbable haste through the heavens. Blasphemy? That was our middle name.

So with our medicines and steam trains and electrical devices we Ben Franklin'd our way into and up away from twentieth-century Earth. Which is to say we stood out in rains with a damned kite and stringed key and dared God to pin back our ears with lightning. He *has* pinned us back a few times. For, come to think of it, in the light of all the dogmas of a great deal of religious thought in the past, we have touched the nerve of the Universal Being. We have dared to sock Death right in the midst of its most terrible grin. We have messed with mosquitoes with sprays and saved half a billion lives. We have reached up to touch the Moon and promise ourselves immortality with starships moving on and on a billion years from this very evening. We Americans are better than we hope and worse than we think, which is to say, we are the most paradoxical of all the paradoxical nations in time.

That is what science fiction is all about.

For science fiction runs out with tapes to measure Now against Then against Breakfast Time Tomorrow. It triangulates mankind amongst these geometrical threads, praising him, warning him.

And since we are at the tail end of the Industrial Revolution and well into the Technological and/or Electronic Revolution, what else is there to read except—

Science Fiction.

It is being read now at long last because it is exciting, because it is human, because it is relevant, because it is ecological.

Sorry about those last two terms, which have been overused to the point of madness the last few years.

But, there are still snobs in the world, and I must give you weapons to fight them with. There still are people who will come up to you and say: Science fiction? Ha! Why read *that*?!

The most direct, off-putting reply is: Science fiction is the most important fiction ever invented by writers. It saw the whole mob of troubles pouring toward us across the shoals of time and cried, "Head for the hills, the dam is broke!" But no one listened. Now, people have pricked up their ears, and opened their eyes.

For, above all, science fiction, as far back as Plato trying to figure out a proper society, has always been a fable teacher of morality, saying: If you cut down trees, plant new ones. If you invent a pill what will you *do* with your religious concepts and structures? If your medicines allow people to grow old, what will you do with your old people? If you put people to sleep for five hundred years and wake them up, what then? Madness?

All of the above statements are science fictional. There is no large problem in the world this afternoon that is not a science-fictional problem.

The problem of war and world politics is the problem of the hydrogen bomb and the fact that as a teacher of Christian principles the Bomb has, *sotto voce*, suggested to politicians that war is no longer an extension of politics. All that has been short-circuited by the Bomb. Politics is now an extension of war. The old rules have been reversed. The old men, tired of arguing, willing to blow each other up, have been sent back to the table for yet another round of conversation. Grand, great, good, swell!

Which doesn't rule out small wars, of course, but the big ones, for the time being, are stashed in the basement. The difference between large and small is important here. Any reduction is welcome. Hundreds of thousands of people were killed in Vietnam, but compared to the fifty million or more destroyed in a short five years in World War II, we can only be thankful that the giant Death has been dissolved down to pygmy size. And, under the shadow of the Bomb, the larger nations, even as I write this, move closer together, fused by mutual fears, instead of separated by selfish antagonisms, all because of a science-fictional invention, which was *always* impossible, and would never be invented: nuclear fission.

For you see, all the things that have happened to us, *were never going to happen.*

Good people said so. Nice people thought so.

But the science-fiction writers always knew otherwise. They could see that locomotive coming down the track, changing the face of the

Civil War. They could see multitudinous inventions, shaping and reshaping mankind and thus shaking the very foundations of churches and synagogues around the world.

Science fiction then is the fiction of revolutions. Revolutions in time, space, medicine, travel, and thought. It is the fiction of the moralist who shakes his hand at us and says: Behave or I pull the switch! It is the fiction of the writer-theologian who shows man the mirror image of God in himself and promises him a real and true heaven if he gets off his ape-hunkers and fires himself into a new Genesis-orbit around the Moon and then on into the abyss dark.

Above all, science fiction is the fiction of warm-blooded human men and women sometimes elevated and sometimes crushed by their machines. Given tape recorders, "what do I do?" a man cries out. Given bugging devices and computers, "what next?" he asks again. Given television and movies and radio and records—a veritable Tower of Electronic Babel, where lies my sanity? Be still, stand among trees, green yourself, says science fiction.

I remember with what happiness, years ago (to the jeers of strangers), I predicted that if the philosopher Bertrand Russell ever wrote fiction it would be science fiction. When Lord Russell finally published two collections of stories, in the fifties, they were predominantly fictions of ideas, which is to say science fictions.

We are all of us, today, fourth-grade philosophers. We are all of us writers, in our minds, of science fictions, for we are being forced to deal with the problems of the ten thousand million machines, the robots that surround us, talk to us, move us. We must have answers so we speak in tongues, and the tongues are always, always, always science fiction. If your problems are metal and electricity, your answers must be run up out of the same stuffs. We move from simplicity to complexity to simplicity again. The history of radio is the history of mankind illustrated in a brief 53 year span: We began with cat's-whisker crystal radios, expanded to ten-dial, maniac-complex devices, which drove men mad in 1928, and on around back to wrist watch-size radios in 1973. We will watch the same history repeated as small towns become mad supercities, collapse, die, and turn back to new small towns as we rebirth ourselves at the end of this century.

Plato's name has been mentioned. You may well, in exasperation, demand why? Because in many ways I consider his *Republic* to be one of the earliest forms of science fiction. Whenever man tries to guess at an ethical/political concept, he is, in effect, oiling a machine, hopeful after controlling other men and giving them new freedoms by such control as will allow them to live in peace. So science fiction, we now see, is interested in more than sciences, more than machines. That *more* is always men and women and children themselves, how they

behave, how they hope to behave. Science fiction is apprehensive of future modes of behavior as well as future constructions of metal. Democracy is a science-fictional concept trying to dream itself to birth with every generation. Any philosophy which does *not* exist but *tries* to exist, is by this definition science fiction. Politics is an inept science, God knows, but a science nevertheless, to which we are trying to fit keys and open hearts and souls.

Again, science fiction guesses at sciences before they are sprung out of the brows of thinking men and women. More, the authors in the field try to guess at machines, which are the fruit of those sciences. Then we try to guess at how mankind will react to those machines, how it will use them, grow with them, and how it will be destroyed by them.

All, all of it fantastic. All, all of it, the story of mankind and inventions, men and machines that step on God's toes and now, late in the day, say Beg Pardon. To which the Universe says: That's all right, go build Eden again. Build it on Earth. Build it on the Moon. Build it on out beyond our unreachable solar system; but build it, live in it, take root in it, survive.

1974

GRAND TOUR 2484

On some morning in the year 2484, five hundred incredible years from now, a family named Peregrine, a good name for far-traveling folks, will bound out of bed on the Moon or Mars, or farther out on some colonial pod circling Alpha Centauri, and ask themselves what to do On Vacation.

Home, might be the answer. Home meaning, of course, Earth, where we all started from. The Seedbed Vacation, it might well be called.

Let's go back, someone suggests, to see what's left of it. See what we did wrong and then did right.

No, let's not, half the family argues. There's nobody left there, only a few genetic retards, so why go back? There are other planets we can visit first. On each one we'll find something like Earth. Let's see the other worlds first. After that—maybe—Earth.

So the Peregrines board their Leapfrogs. Leapfrogs? Yes, that is what they might call their fast-as-the-speed-of-light spaceships. Once aboard, they would blast off on not a short vacation at all. It would be a long haul spanning many years, making landfall at impossible places with incredible climates.

But—with *familiar* architectures!

For what will have happened, of course, as with the westering of Eastern seaboard folks in the mid-nineteenth century, is that people took their architectures with them. As the Europeans spilled over Kansas and died across Arizona, and survived in California, their clapboard houses and picket fences came along. In their dreams, anyway, and in their heads. So when they spat nails and wielded hammers and cut down trees in Sacramento, lo and behold! They re-created Cape Cod and Worcester, Massachusetts.

So, too, as our space travelers go backward and backward down the light spirals toward Earth, they will retrace the dreams of their forefathers who, as they footprinted Mars or named nameless planets far beyond, put up a miniature Empire State Building here, or roofed a French chateau there, along with all the hardware stores, druggerias and pizza palaces that inevitably dog the heels of any caravansary, be it fire rocket or camel.

So on their long day's journey through night, our vacationers will indeed find the familiar architectural faces of Rome here, Venice there and Waukegan, Illinois, just beyond. So the journey will be a journey not only through space but through time and all the ways we had of living and seeing ourselves in shapes and sizes, in colors and textures, most of them brand new, on Mars or wherever we could make a lean-

to and turn it into a Southern Manse or Northern Castle.

All of this, of course, because in the far traveling we will accomplish, we will be forced by time and distance and memory, which hurts, to resurrect the dead in order to go on living. The towns we loved as Earth children will be the towns, sometimes larger, sometimes smaller, that we will facade across any halfway-habitable satellite or world. We will carry along stained-glass windows and build entire houses around them. We will tote a brick from the Via Veneto and, halfway to Andromeda, which is too far by several billion years; we will put up an awning and two chairs, and wink at passing Beasts.

In sum, we will travel in 2484 much as we have done in our time, to revisit the Past that strengthens our Present before we turn back to the sometimes uncertain Futures awaiting us.

And as we travel back down through the universe, we will revisit the entire history of mankind. We will cross paths with the vast firework calligraphies we left behind with our rocket exhausts on our way to seeding star worlds with our harvest children.

And depending on which national or ethnic group settled this world or that, we will find the whims and fancies and late-night nostalgias of Arabs who built mosques, or Swiss who cobbled up fake Alps on planets as pancake-flat as Kansas, or Japanese who left a Shinto shrine and a robot factory behind as they said farewell.

Space and the planets in it, light-years apart, will resemble the back lot of a motion picture studio, with its cross-pollinated structures and its ramshackle remembrance.

And arriving back on Earth for what might well be our last visit, we will tour Canaveral, where the gantries, still standing, tossed our flags to the Moon. Then, we'll go see New York, rebuilt in 1999 and again in 2050, the year they blew up every other block of ugly buildings and planted gardens in their place. The neatest real-estate trick of the age! And then on to Chicago, which finished its rebuilding in 2020 and at last was beautiful. And Los Angeles, which went on growing into the twenty-second century and still had no center.

And then on to Moscow, which finally accepted the true revolution of the twenty-first century: technology.

A trifle of politics but a huge serving of the automobile, the train, the jet, the Xerox and the Fax, the radio, the TV, the videocassette and the telephone instead of the dull hammer and the blunted sickle. Moscow with architectures, by some miracle at last, somewhat lovely. Lovely, wakened from the tomb not long after some democratic-revolutionary kid's laser-beam toy melted Lenin in his ice-locker to simultaneously free the glacier landlocked population.

But why go on? Obviously, Moscow by A.D. 2233, wasn't a bad

place to visit. You wouldn't want to go there summers because there are too many American tourists, but…

There you have the grand tour, 2484 style. Back down in time, to a mostly empty Earth, because everyone couldn't resist heading out and up—or to the New West, as it was called. And the empty cities began to be taken by grass and dust, as the inhabitants of New Earths in separate star systems came back for reunions here in Nantucket or Bombay. Home but no longer home. Mother but no longer mother.

And we turn around and blast back off, up past the Moon and its abandoned colonies, and Mars and its Martians (all with strangely familiar Cherokee faces), we will fix a last stare at the bloodshot eye of Jupiter, ricochet through Saturn's rings, then head for our home away from home.

What a time and tour it will be, far beyond 1984, which turned out to be a bore and not Big Brother after all.

We, the hyper-ventilating generation, bursting with star-seed, can hardly wait to explode up out-away, so we can come back on a lightship trek for a strange visitation, a peculiar vacation.

And if not I, or you, or our children—who?

1984

OF WHAT IS PAST, OR PASSING, OR TO COME

Of what is past, or passing, or to come,
These things I sense and sing, and try to sum.
The apeman with his cave in need of fire,
The tiger to be slain, his next desire.
The mammoth on the hoof a banquet seems,
How to bring the mammoth down fills apeman's dreams.
How taunt the sabertooth and pull his bite?
How cage the flame to end an endless night?
All this the apeman sketches on this cave
In cowards arts that teach him to be brave.
So, beasts and fire that live beyond his lair
Are drawn in science fictions everywhere.
The walls are full of schemes that sum and teach,
To help the apeman reach beyond his reach.
While all his ape-companions laugh and shout:
"What are those stupid blueprints all about?!
Give up your science fictions, clean the cave!"
But apeman knows his sketching chalk can save,
And knowing, learning, moves him to rehearse
True actions in the world to death reverse.
With axe he knocks the tiger's smile to dust,
Then runs to slay the mammoth with spear thrust;
The hairy mountain falls, the forests quake,
Then fire is swiped to cook a mammoth steak.
Three problems thus I solved by art on wall,
The tiger, mammoth, fire, the one, the all.
So these first science fictions circled thought
And then strode forth and all the real facts sought,
And then on wall new science fictions drew,
That run through history and end with… you.

Inspired by a line from W. B. Yeats

AFTERWORD

Architect Jon A. Jerde, AIA

Ray Bradbury's incredible accomplishments as a novelist, playwright and entertainer are very well known to most. However, it should not be overlooked that his visions about urban design, placemaking and planning are equally astounding.

Simultaneous efforts by the Los Angeles Planning Department, Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), the Urban Design Advisory Coalition (UDAC), and the Mayor's Blue Ribbon Committee L.A. 2000 Study all concluded that what will make Los Angeles comprehensible, more humane and lively, is precisely what Ray told us to do twenty years ago.

In his chapter "The Girls Walk This Way; The Boys Walk That Way" Ray gives us his observations about the forgotten pleasures of urban life, abandoned opportunities and a prescription of how to have it all using what we've already got.

Two of his other chapters, "Aesthetics of Lostness," about the importance of eccentricity, and "Yes, We'll Gather at the River," are all about connections. Together, they allude to a new art form/science that is just waking up in the minds of alert urbanists and architects all over the world.

We are limping out of the areas of "new is good, old is bad," "functional logic as the sole concern of form-making," and the idea that exhibitionist object-making is the epitome of architectural achievement. What Bradbury talks about is the conscious construction of experience, the design of time, the vocabulary of aliveness.

Ray's influence on my designer's mind began back in my teenage years when I fully experienced his elaborately real places and moods constructed out of mosaics of such sensory stimuli as full-moon-October-leaf-light, the joy of ascending upward in spherical patterns, intimacy and fresh-cut lawn, the mind-expanding nature of a Santa Ana wind and the spiritual symbolism of giggling kids and the corner soda fountain. Ray taught me that urban placemaking has far more to do with these kinds of concerns than issues of architectural fashion, or urban design pattern making. First, and foremost, cities are about life and its derivative set of experiences. Only secondarily are they about objects.

Ray writes that the metropolis of Los Angeles is really "…80 or 90 separate lonely Ohio-Illinois-Kansas-style towns…." He says that what is missing are the 80 or 90 communal spaces, charged with activities

fashioned to suit the neighborhood, that would give us the opportunity to "gather and stare" and reinstate a feeling of individual belonging, pride and sensibility into the city.

Because of size, metropolitan Los Angeles is not perceivable as a place—at best, it is an abstract amorphous gridded field of sameness. Actually the field is made up of "micropolises," a series of nested neighborhoods or districts, each with subtle but distinct individualities of use, topography, landscape, ecology and inhabitants. Los Angeles becomes comprehensible—no longer abstract—as these micropolises (areas such as Westwood, Little Tokyo, Santa Monica, Silverlake and Pasadena) assume a more identifiable and individual presence. Each micropolis requires a heart, a center, complete with all of the uses, symbols, communal spaces (*a la* Ray's plaza) to make it recognizable, identifiable and relatable. Chris Leinberger, in an article published in *The Atlantic* (January 1988) refers to these as urban villages.

Creating the 80 to 90 micropolises is precisely what is needed to move Los Angeles on its way from its first growth, suburban hard-to-love-or-comprehend boom town paradise to the beginnings of the twentieth century's first working model macropolis. Micropolis-making requires everything Bradbury suggests and more, dealing with density, theme, design languages. The net effect produces the much-sought-after answer to big sections of the growth/quality of life issue —i.e., better job/housing balance, reduced travel, vital neighborhoods, improved environments, community pride and identity.

Over the years, Ray and I have collaborated on various real and unreal projects. Working with him is a delight… he is not normal. Interacting with him is like talking to a chortling fireplace—things like gravity or the impossible are vague concepts to him. His ideas about Los Angeles are pure; he understands the essential spirit and parts of the city as no other.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Previously published essays in this collection originally appeared in the following publications, to whose editors and publishers thanks are due.

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New York, 2017

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Electronic edition published 2017 by RosettaBooks
Cover design by Christian Fuenfhausen
ISBN (EPUB): 9780795350498
ISBN (Kindle): 9780795350504
www.RosettaBooks.com